

STAFFORD COUNTY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW OF ALARIC R. MacGREGOR, SR
BY MOLLY PYNN

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Subject of Tape(s)

ALARIC MacGREGOR

Q: Mr. MacGregor, could you give us your full name, please?

A: Alaric R. MacGregor.

Q: Senior?

A: Senior.

Q: Right. And when were you born?

A: August the 27th, 1906.

Q: 1906. And where were you born?

A: In Stafford County.

Q: And were you born in the hospital or at home?

A: Born at home. At Concord.

Q: At Concord. Mr. MacGregor, has your family lived in Stafford County very long?

A: My great-grandfather bought the place in 1859 and give it to my greatgrandmother. And the family has been living here ever since.

Q: Okay, what was you great-grandfather's name?

A: Nathaniel Mortimer. (Someone else also gives name of great-grandfather.)

Q: And who did he give it to?

A: Mary Eliza MacGregor. (Someone else in room says "tell what you called her".) Mary Eliza was always called Ummy by the children--the other grandchildren.

Q: Okay. Where did they come from before they came to Stafford County?

A: Come from Maryland.

Q: Maryland. What kind of work did your family do?

A: My father, he was disabled in the Spanish-American War and he farmed.

Q: How about your grandfather?

A: Grandfather worked in the Bureau of Engraving in Washington. During the Civil War, this lieutenant and his soldiers come in and took mighty near everything that they had on the place. Course, he took it in good faith 'cause he signed a receipt for it. And we brought it before Congress lots of times, but they never give us a penny--they just disallow it. They sawed off about \$12,000 and then cut it down to about 4. That's been 20 years since it was in Congress last. (Someone else in room says "tell her about Granddaddy in the Civil War, what happened during the Civil War.")

Q: You still don't have your money?

A: And of course, Congressman said that if they appropriated money enough to pay us, they'd have to pay millions and millions of dollars all over the country you know, for the type of bills, and they just couldn't afford it.

Q: Did other members of the family work because of the father? The children work?

My mother never worked out on a job. The girls--two of them trained for nurses and then ... nursed the balance of their life ... one of them nursed right steady all the time.

Q: You say your family farmed. What crops were raised?

A: Corn was the main crop. We had soybeans, black-eyed peas, clover, and hay.

Q: How large was the farm?

A: We had about 30 acres open land.

Q: And did you use mules or a tractor?

A: We used mules.

Q: Mules. Was there any kind of farmer's organization in the county that you can remember?

A: There was a company called Farmer's Loan that would loan farmers money at a low interest. I think it was Farmer's Union.

Q: Now, did you have any brothers and sisters?

A: 7 sisters and 1 brother.

Q: Were you the youngest or the oldest--or what order were you in?

A: I was the fourth child.

Q: Fourth child. And are you married?

A: Yes.

Q: And when were you married?

A: Married December 17, 1932.

Q: And could you give us your wife's name?

A: Myrtle Cooper MacGregor. (Someone else in room: tell them about the night you got married. That's what we want-the stories.)

A: The second night that I was married... (Someone else in room: the night that you got married, there was three couples...)

A: Well, it was--we decided to get married--my wife and I. Course, her daddy had been holding a little back on you know... (Someone else says "age") signing for her. She was going on 18. And her brother was a little older than she was and he wanted to get married. But he wouldn't sign for him so we went up there that day and he was going on signing for us so her brother jumped up and said "If you're going to sign for them, got to sign for him, too." So he agreed to do it. Then, her brother's sister (Someone else: "he went after Maggie") said we could go over and get her sister. So we went on over there, and a boy over there, Lyman Shackelford, he was dressing all up in a blue serge suit. I asked him where he was going. He said he was going to get married, too. So the two sisters and the brother and sister and myself all got married that night. Snow about a foot deep. We went down to her uncle's house--the preacher-and he married us right there at Julian Jett's house. (Someone else: "Julian Knight") Yeah, Julian Knight's house. And, the next night, course, it was snowing when i got off--I was working for the state--it was snowing when I got off that day. Then they sent a foreman down, ride a horse down home where we went for the second night and I had to go out and push snow all night that night. Went to the state shop and they carried me down to White Oak School in a truck and I got on a Fordson tractor with a helper and went through there to Wildcat Corner on out to Route 3 and my helper quit and walked home. He lived up here on ... and Falmouth. And finally, the snow was so bad, I couldn't push it off with the Firdson and tractor, so I left the snowplow there and rode the tractor back to White Oak School and walked from White Oaks School back up to the state shop. And I would have quit, but I just got married, so I figured I couldn't quit.

Q: Did Mrs. MacGregor work?

A: Yes, she was working then. She was making \$6.35 a week. And I was making \$63.75 a month. And I'd get up and carry her off to Gordon Byram's store to catch the G & H bus and then come back by there that evening and pick her up. That's the way we lived for a few months. We lived up in Rock Hill District and then we moved back down to Aquia District in an old place

called Concord. We stayed there awhile and then we rented the upper floor of the post office at the courthouse. And I had to give \$10 a month and I thought that was awful. \$10 a month rent for the place--four rooms and then after that, well, her grandmother give us some money and we bought a little place right behind the school house. And lived there for 17 years, right at the school. And then after that, I bought a place down on what you call Coal. Landing on Aquia Creek. We moved down there and lived there 17 years. While I was living behind the school house, I went into partnership with a fellow-Charlie Crismond with trucks. We worked them for three or four years. I got a contract for a star route carrying the mail. I had that for 15 years.

Q: Then after you had the star route, then what did you do?

A: Well, while I had that route, I run for sheriff and was elected sheriff in '47. And they give me \$2,000 salary a year and give me \$500 that I could hire all the deputies that I wanted or could.

Q: And how many deputies did you have?

A: Well, you couldn't get nothing for \$500 back then much, but my brother, he'd come back out of the service and he was working at Quantico. So I was joking with him one day and I said, "You might as well come on and be my deputy." Didn't think he was foolish enough to quit a Government job, but he said, "I'd like to" and I said, "Oh, no, charlie--you shouldn't do that. I don't want you to do that." And, but he said oh, he wanted to and I said, "Well, I can't give you but \$500 a year." "Oh.." but he said, "but I can play music. I can sell insurance and I'll carry the mail for you." So that's what we did. And we took all the money that come in from the salaries and just split it in half. And we made out like that for eight years. And then, I lost the election. And when I came back the next four years, I did come back and was re-elected and had three deputies then and, of course, the job was a whole lot easier and whole lot--of course, I worked all the time, but I had other deputies--three deputies that did a whole lot. You had to attend jail and do the road work and all and someone had to answer the phone all the time. Right hard work--I think they were getting \$3300 then every year.

Q: Did you have any children?

A: Yes--July 15, 1936, we had a son born A.R. MacGregor, Jr. He lives right next door to me now.

(Someone else: Where was he born?)

A: He was born in the old building that we bought right behind the school house. That building happened to be the first school that I went to. I went there three or four years. When I first started going to school. The school teacher at that time, was boarding at our home, and we walked two miles from Concord out to the school.

Q: Is that school still standing now?

A: No, I finally sold that place to Gayle(?) for the school grounds that's there now.

Q: What school would that be now? Is that the Stafford Middle School?
(Someone else: It's Stafford Middle School now--it's the old Stafford High.)

Q: The old Stafford High School?

A: That's old Stafford High School.

Q: What was the name of the school when you went to it?

A: Just Stafford.

Q: Stafford--just Stafford School, I guess.

A: Well, I reckon anybody would refer to it as Aquia District, Aquia. Because they had them over here in Widewater and they had little schools all over the county over here. (Someone else: How long did you go? To school?)

A: I went to school--in this school, when we went to school then--well, had the little geography and big geography, little history and big history, and we would go as far as we could for about ... one year and then the next year, you start in again right first ... and you do that for the next four years. And then, of course, they stepped you up and moved out of that school, go to the other school. Had to be in certain books to be in such a grade and I went from primer to the fourth grade, I think--about--I had just gone up in books and back two or three times and then I went through the fifth grade and the sixth grade. And my daddy told me I'd have to stay home a half a day and work on

the farm. And more like, I didn't think school was worth that much, so I quit altogether. Which I realize now was wrong, but I didn't want to go to school 1/2 day and by the time you work 1-2 a day, you didn't feel like going to school, so I give up on school.

Q: Where was the second school? Is that still standing?

A: No, the big school is built right where it was. It may be some parts of it here in the middle of that school. Built around it, like. And of course, Fred Blackman was my principal. Madam McCauley was one of my teachers. She lives on down White Oak Road now--if she's still living. I think she is. And Evelyn ... Hester was my last teacher I had. I don't know where she is now.

Q: What areas of the County--in what areas of the County did you live?

A: Rock Hill District down in Aquia District.

Q: And where did you live in Rock Hill District?

A: I--(Someone else: Old Grove's place) yeah, on the old Grove's place, on the corner of 648 and 630. (Someone else: Mary F. Grove)

Q: Mary F. Grove? (Someone else: Mary Frances)

Q: And then you moved down to Aquia District?

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay. How did you get to work? Mainly?

A: Well, when I first started working, it was on the farm here. I can remember that day. It was mowing time. See this front out here--about 500 yards from the house and I walked ... and then I farmed this field out here where I live now--raised corn in it. (Someone else: What did you farm it with?) I farmed it with mules or horses. I had three mules I kept a long time and then I'd work two horses. Had bad luck with horses, I'd been working mules all the time. I didn't know a horse wouldn't take care of itself like a mule. A mule will stop working before it works itself to death. It'll stop working, but

this horse worked until he staggered and I took him out right then..., but two weeks later, he died.

And the other horse, I was riding it from the courthouse home, it run into a tree and killed itself. We had accidents back then, too.

Q: After you went by horseback, how'd you get to work?

A: Well, I went to work after that with my uncle down on Fishing Shores so's I used to go down the creek from here in a boat, that's about five miles down there to where he fished. And I had a team. I used to go there in the wagon some 'cause I hauled wood for him down there, used to go back and forth in the wagon. And just--about that time, well, my daddy was deputy sheriff, Sheriff Curtis and I used to ride the mules--hook them up to a surry and ride them all over the County to serve papers or to make arrests or whatever the Sheriff had to do. And I didn't like that job and I begged him to quit. Didn't have any idea that I'd have the--job at any rate. Didn't think I'd have the job for nothing. And I was carrying the mail one day, my brother-in-law was with me, and he was joking all the time and carrying on, and he read something in the paper about who was prospect for sheriff. And then he put my name in it, you know. At least he said "your name" and I said "my name in itI know my name ain't in it" and he said "oh, yeah, it is". Soon as I got to the next mailbox and I said "let me see that paper." And he showed it to me and sure enough my name was in a group of names. And I handed the paper back to him and told him, I said, "I wouldn't have the job on a silver platter And I really meant that, I mean, I meant that as much as anything I ever said in my life. And then people saw it in the paper and that's the only reason I was ever elected sheriff, I am sure of that. People saw it in the paper and they come to me and asked me to run. After telling hundreds of them that I wouldn't run, they kept on until they talked me into it, finally saying that I'd run. And I was lucky and won. I don't know if I was lucky or not, but I won. Right smart job. And I worked myself near to death for eight years. Didn't think I was going to able to do it.

Q: By that time, did you have automobiles?

A: By that time, we had automobiles, yes. Yes, in fact, I drove my own car quite a few years and up to '53 and state gave me 7 cents a mile to drive my own car. And then they finally gave me a car in '53, they gave me a car to drive. (Someone else: What was the first car you ever had?) In my life? (Someone else: Yeah.) '17 model Dodge. That was in the early twenties. (Someone else: What did you get after that?) Well, I had Model T's and i had a Star(?) and I had a Plymouth. (Someone else: What year was the Star?) '26. (Someone else: How much did it cost you?) \$125. (Someone else: What did you do with it?) I traded it off for--I had the Star up until just before I met my wife--I traded it off for '29 Ford and I had the '29 Ford up until after we

were married. And then I bought the first Ford V-8 that was around here.

Q: What year was that?

A: '32.

Q: '32. Remember how much you paid for that?

A: I'm pretty sure it was around \$500.

Q: Okay, was there much crime in the County back when you were a youngster?

A: No, I wouldn't say it was much. Once in a great while, you'd hear of a killing, but not very often. And a fight now and then, of course, seldom a fight was ever brought into court. One of them would walk off and that would

(A: continued)

be it. And a few breaking and enterings, but I wouldn't say it was a whole lot of crime. You'd have to have a jury every once in a while. Helped to serve them summonses and when my daddy was deputy, back before '42, they paid them commission--paid them so much on each paper they served. And I know they were paying him on civil papers, 60 cents. Sometimes have to drive all the way across the County for 60 cents.

Q: How about later on when you were deputy--when you were sheriff? Crime pick up a little bit then? Keep you in a job?

A: Well, when I was elected sheriff, I was elected nearly two months and I told my wife, this is a cinch of a job to do.,- best job I'd had. Well, wasn't such a good job with nothing to do. Didn't have nothing to do. I'll never forget that day, the phone rung and I answered the phone and they tole me to hurry up here to Boswells Corner, there had been a stabbing. That was my first call that was on a criminal case. So I was going to go up there, and before I got out the door, the phone rung again. Said come over here to Chatham Heights, there's been a hit and run. And before I got out of sight of out of hearing the phone, it rung again. Said hurry up down here to Brook Station--a man done shot somebody. Me being new, couldn't think it could last forever, but I called Henry Chichester, our commonwealth attorney, and he said, "Well, take care of the case up at Boswells Corner, the stabbing, and give Wilbur Rover(?) the special officer the hit and run case at Chatham and you and I'll go to Brook tomorrow." That's exactly what he said and from the day on, while I was sheriff, didn't let up a whole lot. The last two years on it--the seventh and eighth year I was that I was in there, it worked me--well, didn't know for sure whether they'd be able to keep it or not. Kept me going some-times, Myrtle would have six calls waiting for me to answer when I'd get home at night from...

Q: It definitely picked up and to did the population.

A: The people would be fussing why I didn't carry out...answer other calls.

Q: Well, in spite of the crime, did you think that Stafford County was a good place for children? To raise children? Must have if you've been here all your life.

A: Yes, I think it's one of the best places in the world. particularly.
At that time,

Q: Did people move in and out a lot of the County or did they--or were they born and raised here and die here?

A: Born and raised here and died here mostly. Most of them. Very seldom anybody moved out of the County. (Someone else: How about your family?) Well, my family come in here back in 1859 and most of the family is around here now. My brother is down in Alabama and I've got some nieces out in Arizona. (Someone else: Your grandparents have lived here all their lives.) Yes, my grandparents lived here.(Someone else: Where are they buried?) Buried up here in the MacGregor graveyard at Concord. Got 1-2 acre dedicated to a graveyard there.

Q: Your grandparents and your parents are buried there?

A: Yes, my parents and grandparents.

Q: And you are here and your son lives here and you have a grandson living here.

A: All five of them--five grandsons.

Q: Five grandchildren?

A: Yeah.

Q: And one great-grandson.

A: One great-grandson.

Q: And are they all in this same area here?

A: Yes, all the grandchildren--within hollering distance. (Someone else: Why did they bury the family in a family cemetery and not in a churchyard? Do you know why they didn't

bury them in a churchyard? Some people bury in family plots and some bury in churchyards. Do you know why they didn't?) No, no, I don't know why. Just wanted a graveyard there and got everyone to agree on it. That was in the 1900's-- about 1915 or '16.

Q: Who was the first one buried there?

A: I really don't know. Of course, they had aunts there and grandparents. (Someone else: Do you remember when Dr. Brent was buried there?) Well, he was buried--I remember the burial, but I don't remember the time. Of course, him and his wife were both buried there. They were Catholics and I was a little boy, but I remember that well enough. Dr. Brent, he used to live right behind the courthouse right there where the road comes out by the jailhouse right there. He lived right there.

Q: Why was he buried in the MacGregor lot?

A: Why?

Q: Uh huh, do you know why?

A: His wife was kin to the MacGregors. (Someone else: Where did they have the funerals?) The funeral was right there at the grave.

Q: Didn't have funerals in the churches? Or funeral homes?

A: Well, not then. Had the funeral right there and buried right there.

Q: Were you ever involved in any activities in the community? Any organizations outside of your work?

A: I was a member of the Minuteman.

Q: What was that?

A: Something like militia, you know. And that was during--that was before World War 11, but of course, help out in most any emergency, something like that.

Q: Forerunner of the National Guard or--?

A: Something like that.

Q: Anything else? Any private organizations or--?

A: Well, I belonged to a MacGregor Clan from Scotland. You know, I--we are direct descendents from Rob Roy MacGregor(?)--I don't reckon you've heard of him.

Q: Oh, yes.

A: They had a movie out one time, you know, and he tried to overthrow a king which I don't know if he was right or wrong. In my young days, I used to wish he'd won. But now after all this guerilla fighting, which I don't believe in, I think it should leave disputes right at the ballot box and let the man who most of the people think can run the country run it his term anyway. I don't know whether the Clan was too much like guerilla fighting for me or not--it might have been. So if he'd won, I don't know if I'd won or not. Be like the boy sitting under the acorn tree with his girlfriend... Do you remember that?

Q: No.

A: And he--a great big old pumpkin weighed about 40 pounds, little acorns under the tree. And the boy said to the girl and said, "It's strange how God Almighty made a little tiny acorn like that on a great big tree and put a great big pumpkin like that on a little old vine." At about that time, an acorn hit him on the head and he said, "I reckon God was right after all. That little pumpkin would've killed me." So I don't know what old Rob Roy would've done if he'd won.

(Someone else: were there any activities that included dancing?)

A: Well,... (Someone else: where were some places you went to?)

Q: ... What did you do for fun?

A: Well, my wife didn't dance much when we first got married and then I begged her to dance hundreds of times and she wouldn't dance with me. So we went to Alexandria for the dance they had it on radio and everything. We danced the Paul Jones and who was beside me, but my wife coming around. Surprised me half to death. And of course, ever since then, she's been dancing and we used to

go to three dances every week. Three dances every week. Stay up until one or two o'clock. Worked every day--never stayed away from work on account of going to a dance in my life.

Q: Where did you go to these dances?

A: At Aquia Tavern was one of them.

(Someone else: and where was Aquia Tavern?)

Q: Yeah?

A: Rainbow. Aquia Tavern was right in the corner of 610 and Route 1.

Q: Right across from the Aquia Church?

A: Right across from Aquia Church, yeah.

Q: When did they tear that down?

A: It's been torn down about thirty years.

Q: About thirty years?

A: Uh huh--about thirty years.

Q: Okay. And you had another one--Rainbow?

A: Rainbow Dance Hall in Spotsylvania. Johnson's out in Spotsylvania, Poplar Tavern--we used to go over there.

Q: Where was that?

A: That was out in Spotsylvania.

Q: Doesn't sound like there were too many dance halls activities in Stafford if you went to Spotsylvania.

A: Well, Aquia Tavern was there for a long time. And of course, they give a name of being a right rough place. I was on sort of a folk committee. Bouncers, more or less.

Didn't have a whole lot of trouble.

Q: Dances at Massey Store?

A: Yeah, that's where I saw my first movie--saw it over Massey's Store right

here at the courthouse. And I danced there and went there a lot. (Someone else: ... first movie?) I reckon I was like 7 or 8 years old and an Indian came out and sneaked up behind another Indian and drove a butcher knife right into his chest and I ... Inever looked at any more of that and I never went to another movie for nine or ten years. Never went to no more. And I went to a ... at Captain Vance's down there below Fredericksburg and Benny Pitts gave me a ticket--gave all the boys a ticket to the movie. And he brought us up there in a truck. I walked by the movie and went on past it. I wouldn't go in there--I didn't think I was going to, then I got to thinking all the other boys went on in there you know, so I got to thinking, well, I'll go in there, but if I don't like it, I'll get up and walk out. Went on in there and then I went to hundreds, thousands after that. Benny Pitts made good of a 10-cent ticket I think--I know I paid him back a thousand dollars.

Q: What church did you attend--did your family attend?

A: Register Chapel Methodist Church at the courthouse.

Q: At the courthouse?

A: Yeah. I joined that when I was about six years old.

Q: When was that built, do you remember?

A: Well, it got--I don't remember now exactly, but it had another church sitting there, you know. It wasn't sitting, headed toward the road. It was built about right along with the road. And the door faced the Northwest. And we had a hurricane come through there. It hit down in a place where Jack Gallahan lived and blowed all-of that house away. It was a big frame house they built over log rooms... it blowed everything away except the log rooms, and they had a well with a well chain. It blowed that bucket out of the well so fast that it scraped the links out so you could unhook them all. I went down on and unhooked some of them and it blowed a cherry tree down about 15 inches through and blowed every limb off it and carried it about 200 yards down the field. And

then it was one of the kind that bounced along, they claimed. You know, raised up and down. It jumped up over vines and things. Took about a mile through there to the church and stopped right there at the church. Stopped right there at the church. It blowed it off foundation, the parsonage was right down close to the highway--where the highway is now. And what surprised me most in it, it had good sound weather boarding on the parsonage. It picked a brick up and throwed it through that weather board. Not with the grain, but across the grain, and cut it out just as even as you could cut it with a saw. Throwed that brick right through there. Of course, I hadn't heard much about... I have heard since then that it could pick up a straw and drive it right into a post, you know. But then it left the ground again and come on down one mile to my uncle's place, Uncle French Woodard's. Throwed 20 trees--apple trees down that he bad out there. And then went up again, went over our house, down at Concord, which is 2 miles and a half from the Callahan s place, an dropped at Snellings Church. Dropped it down there on the Aquia Creek, about 2 1/2 or three miles from the house where Leroy lives.

Q: My goodness. Any other storms like that that you can remember?

A: No, I didn't know about--well, it wasn't classed as a hurricane, but I was down on the creek and that year we had a bunch of fishermen on Old Fishing Shore--supposed to be--they called them Salty Dogs. Rough weather, don't pay much attention to it, you know, but they had 14 small boats and they were camping on a big boat, two-master. And they brought the boar in Aquia Creek and anchored her right in the channel--had a narrow channel there. And the other boats was coming to her when the storm was raising. I was standing on the shore. So the other boats started trying to get to shore. When they come ashore, they said to us they talked about Aquia Creek being a good harbor, said, "Is this what you call a good harbor?" My uncle said, "I've been here 63 years and this is the roughest I have seen, but it was blowing water over top of the mast. The mast was 55 feet high. It was blowing water over top of them 'cause I was sitting right there looking at it. And then didn't

have any more of that kind of wind, storm was over with, we had the Hazel just about 25 years ago I reckon--when the Hazel come through here. And I was up the creek down about a mile, place called Coal Landing. Had a big ash tree out in the yard and it was about 15 inches through, I reckon. And then I had a sycamore tree that was growing right on the edge of the water and it had one stump of three trees growing out of that one stump. And that Hazel come up the creek, that hurricane they called Hazel, it blowed those two trees down. Blowed them right down flat on the ground. But it broke the ash, but the sycamore was laying there when I left to go get my wife (and I had three) ... I told my wife, when I picked her up, I said, "We lost two of our good trees down in the yard." And we was sorry and when we got back home, that sycamore tree was sitting right up just like it was before the storm. And it's sitting right there today. I'd have give a \$100 if I'd took a picture of it while it was dying and then took a picture of it later, but I didn't do it. Didn't have any idea it was going to be sitting up like that and 1, but I had three ... no witnesses there with me--let the old lady know I hadn't gone crazy. That was the truth--I suspect that beat all. Right up in there.

Q: What did you do when you got sick? Any doctors in the County or--?

At Yes, we had our doctor, Dr. Gordon and Dr. Snead. Dr. Hill, he died--I didn't know him, he died when I was real young. He died from intestinal trouble. Had to take some of his intestines out and, at that time, that was hardly ever heard of. Of course, he died from it. And of course, Dr. Gordon was our doctor. I had a wreck right in front of his place one time. And knocked me out. I was out for about 20 minutes and of course, I was right in his yard. They carried me over in his yard. I was right near his yard, right in front of his place. And soon as I come to, I could see old Dr. Gordon had a kind of halo around him, it looked like, you know, and they were--some of them were crying and some of them were telling me to lay still, you know, and I thought I was nearly dead. Scared to death. And when I started moving around a little bit, twisting around a little bit and it wasn't hurting, so wasn't nothing matter with me much, I had three little cuts, one right here on the eye, one right here, one right here, and so then he wanted to sew it up. And I said, "Doctor, why in the world didn't you sew it up while I was out?", and he said, "Didn't know if there was going to be any use or not." Wasn't going to lose no thread.

Q: You wouldn't be around to pay the bill, probably. Where did Dr. Gordon live? or hwere did he have his office?

A: He had his office right there at the corner where you turn to go into

Moncure School. His house was right there in his office. His office was right there in his house.

(Someone else: on 610?) Perry lived there ... he may still be living there.

Q: That old white house?

A: Yeah.

(Someone else: all the babies were born at home. Didn't have doctors for that.)

Q: Any dentists in the county? What did you do for a toothache?

A: Well, the doctor used to pull a tooth every now and then, but of course, the first dentist I went to, I reckon I was about 20 years old. Dr. King, in Fredericksburg. First dentists I remember. (Someone else: what kind of medicine did you all take? If you didn't go to the doctor, what kind of medicine did you take?) Well when we had a type of chill, like that malaria, we would take Bedacbe(?)--that's a medicine that's got a whole lot of quinine in it's real bitter, terrible to take. But we'd take things like that, you know. Castor oil,-- worst thing in the world anybody can swallow, I'm sure. (Someone else: did you like Castor Oil?)

A: Castor Oil was awful.

Q: Did you get a morning's dose of Cod Liver Oil?

A: Well, never had much Cod Liver oil. There was one of them we took--

A: Black draught. I know one time I laid down and rolled over on the fence. I had a great big piece of lead in my mouth and I swallowed it. I ran over to the house and I told mama, and old "En" said, "I'll have to give you a dose of Castor Oil." Bad as I hated Castor Oil, I hooked my hands behind me and walked up to him, throwed my head back and I swallowed that thing of Castor Oil and I had a thought I was going to die when I swallowed it. Thought I was going to die.. And when the doctor came along and he told them that was the worst thing in the world she could've given me. Castoria was medicine we used to take a whole lot of.

Q: Were there any midwives in the county?

A: Aunt Charlotte was mine. She was the one that delivered me. Aunt Charlotte Clark. Lived right there--lived right in there close to Paradise Trailer Court--right in there. Some Clarks live back in there now, I think.

Q: Babies were generally born at home?

A: Most all babies at home.

Q: And if you had to go to a hospital, where did you go?

A: Well, undoubtedly, the first hospital around here was Mary Washington, down on the river, Rappahannock River there in Fredericksburg. I think it was there until they built this new one. And my sisters trained in that old hospital and I went over there one day. My daddy carried me to Brook Station, and I got on a train and went to Fredericksburg. And went up to the hospital to visit my sisters. Was sitting in a swing, my sister was laying there, had her head in my lap, when they called over--black powder blowed up on the railroad track down there in Fredericksburg. Shook the windows all up and everybody jumped up and started down the street, towards the railroad where the car was, somebody come back up there and said, "Another car down there" and they thought it was going to go off. I know they did that just to get the crowd away from there. Course, found out later it was full of cotton. But it played the game alright(?) and the car was--the train was supposed to come through there at 20 minutes to four and it was twenty minutes to ten before the train--before we got that track back for the train to come through there. Of course, that was fast, but it seemed long to me because daddy bought me a pair of secondhand Army shoes and they were hurting my feet. And I wouldn't pull them off before all them gals. I wouldn't pull them off--I just kept them on, but I've never worn a pair of shoes that hurt my feet since then. But-

Q: That taught you a lesson.

A: Daddy was waiting for me at Brook Station when I come back. Train finally come through there and, of course, he had heard it.

Q: Remember what year that was?

A: No, no, I was going to ask Aileen not long ago. Ask Aileen--she was in training--she went in training on Christmas Eve. And I won't forget because we had always--all of us--spent Christmas at home--all of us. Always--that was the first one. But they called her in Christmas Eve. She went on and- (Someone else: what did you usually do on Christmas?) Huh? (Someone else: what did you usually do on Christmas?) Well had a big turkey dinner. And of course, most of the oranges(?) I got until I was 10 years old, was the one I got in my sock every Christmas.

Q: In the toe.

A: Yep--in the toe of the stocking.

Q: And didn't it taste good?

A: Seldom ever got an orange.

Q: Didn't get candy much either, did you?

A: No, very little candy. We'd get a pound of caramel candy, provided among the children--nine of us. Of course, enjoyed that a whole lot more than candy now. (Someone else: did you have a tree?) Oh, yes, always had a Christmas tree. (Someone else: always cedar.) And great big cedar tree. I can remember coming down them old steps, and there was Santa Claus. Had to go back up and wait--back to sleep.

Q: When was the Christmas tree put up? Was it put up--

A: The day before Christmas.

Q: Day before Christmas.

A: Yeah. They were, of course, taken down New Year's Day.

Q: And how did you spend Christmas Eve? Were there any particular family--?

A: Usually behave yourself or Santa Claus wasn't coming.

Q: But you just went to bed at a normal time, huh? What kind of presents did you get as a child?

A: What I'd find most was a cap pistol--that's what I liked most. Shoot firecrackers in a cap pistol.

And of course, the girls they liked the dolls.

Q: But you didn't get a whole truckload of presents like you do today?

A: No, no, indeed. Just a few 10-cent articles kept up--and of course, didn't cost about 10-cents and...

Q: Remember when electricity came to the county?

A: I remember all right, but I don't remember the date.

Q: ... Thirties or the forties or the--?

A: Well, it was in the thirties. When we first got it, we were at the little house behind the school house. We got it from the school. ...At the courthouse there ... electricity must have come in last of the twenties. Because when we had electricity there behind the school house, there was--the electric company run it from the school house. And it costs us a dollar a month. Unless you burn a powerful lot. If you burn a powerful lot, you know, it might costs a little more. It costs you a dollar a month anyway whether you burnt any lights or not. Of course, I know the electric man come there and asked me if I would sign up for electricity to come down that road. And he said it would cost me \$4.88 a month and I told him, "Yeah, if it'll help the people down below there, I'll most surely sign up." But then they brought it down to the transmission line--the big line, you know, down here and run it out down through there. So I didn't have to pay that extra money.

Q: Do you remember when the telephones came in?

A: Well, telephones was before that. Of course, first telephone line I had was in the little house out there. But I don't remember, but I know old man Gill was a telephone and the operator and all, you know, and Wilbur Gill, his son, went to school with me. Telephones must have come in late teens or early twenties--one or the other.

Q: You don't know who had the first phone in the county, do you?

A: No, no.

Q: Do you know who had the first tractor?

A: First tractor?

Q: First farming tractor?

A: No, I don't remember who had the first one, but they had the old tractor then--the old Fordson tractor then--which was--in my opinion wasn't no account for nothing. Good sawing wood(?) after you got it started, but too hard to start. Fordson Tractor. Now Ford made a tractor later on in the forties that was one of the best little pieces of machinery you can get. (Someone else: what about the old steam tractors?) 'Well, my uncle ordered 18-horsepower steam tractor from out west, secondhand, and delivered it here at the courthouse. And him and I drove it down to Coal Drifts down below Brook Station and run it around the saw mill with it for a few years. Of course, that was the first steam tractor that I ever saw--the only steam tractor I ever saw in this county, up until I was married. I'm pretty certain that was the first steam tractor in the county, I believe.

Q: Do you remember which road was paved first?

A: Route 1.

Q: Route 1?

A: Route 1, uh-huh.

Q: And that was in the twenties?

A: Route 1--in the twenties. It was in the twenties. Well, it might have been in the last teens, it was the--when they paved Route 1. (Someone else: do you remember anything about it? Who worked on it, or what they did? Did you Watch them do it, or--?) Well, I know that Ed English and Howard English. It was one of the first jobs that they ever worked on. They were boys. They were working in that dry cement-- pretty nasty job then. Dropping the bags in the mixer and all and that was

right down here where 631 crosses 1. At the north end of it. Austin Run. (Someone else: so they paved it with concrete?) Yeah, concrete. (Someone else: how did they do it? Where did they take the machinery and all? What did they have to do it with?) Just haul dry cement there and put it in mixers and they put it in a great big scoop-like funnel mixer, you know, and put it like that and dumped it in the mixer. And mixed it all up good and then dump it back out and spread it. And they had the sides up there and then they had this pole go all the way across there, two men pulled it back and forth and leveled it up just like you do a basement or something like that. Hard work.

Q: Well, they changed when they built Route 1. They didn't follow Telegraph Road completely.

A: Yeah, well, that's when they built what you call North one way. Or South one way. (Someone else: now when they went through Austin Run right there with that road, they covered up the old dinky track, didn't they?) Well, they covered up the old dinky. That's where the dinky track was. (Someone else: the dinky was what? What was the dinky?)

Q: What was the dinky?

A: Well, it was little old engine that run on rails. (Someone else: steam engine.) Yeah, steam engine. (Someone else: where did it run from?) It run from the mine down to Coal Landing. (Someone else: which mine?) It was a mine that they dug mica(?) out of. On up here at Garrisonville. I think it was called Garrisonville Mine. Right back there on 684. Turn right in there. And when my uncle, Nathaniel Mortimer(?) MacGregor, he was a foreman on that road when it was built. (Someone else: and they used to run the dinky from the mine to where?) Aquia Creek-- Coal Landing. And ship the material on barges--load barges there. Carry the barges out with tug boats. (Someone else: do you remember anything about the mine? That happened at the mines?) Yeah. One day, I was laying right under a Model T pickup and tightening up rods on it and the ground shook. And this was just right at the courthouse. Right there in front of that school. And I found out that 28 cases of dynamite had gone

off at the mine. There was--and they was sitting in a--there was three men, two men and a boy--sitting in a '28 Chevrolet. About 150 yards from the dynamite. Well, it blowed the grass right off the ground, the leaves, they just...on down past that car. One man couldn't even talk for a month--course, he stammered all the time a little, but he just stammered two or three months before he got so's he could talk longer. And old man Snead, fire warden, he run by there, hollered and told me there was a fire up there ans wanted me to go up there. Of course, he's supposed to go there else he'd get a warrant for you if you didn't go and fight the fire. Which I didn't mind. I picked up Johnny Stewart and another boy--two or three of us--he carried up on up to the mine. When we got up there, got in sight of it, well somebody said, "It's a whole lot more dynamite goes on out here." And so, we kept on going and I looked back., I seen Johnny going up around the curve, going back. He said, "The heck with old man Snead." He didn't want to get close to dynamite. So we went on up there. The dynamite--the fire didn't get to it. Of course, new dynamite won't go off, without burning it. You can burn it and it won't go off. But dynamite stored for a long time, the nigroglycerin that's in it--will sometimes sweat out of it and it'll drop. It can drop down and explode the whole thing. A drop of that nitroglycerin.

Q: Where did you shop? For groceries? And clothes?

A: Well, the country store at Coal Landing owned by my grandfather. I-we did all the shopping we could with him. And then, of course, they had country stores that Taylor Cooper(?), he kept one at the courthouse. Edward Fleece(?), ran the one that was finally Massey's store. Edward Fleece, he run that for Jim Ashby(?) and Jim Byram run it for Jim Ashby some. (Someone else: where the people get their goods? Where--how did they stock the stores? Where did he get the merchandise?) We had the Coal Landing, my grandfather run that place that was shipped in. Most of it by boat. There was a boat come within 150 yards of the store. And he had a warehouse that a boat could tie up to and unload right there in the warehouse. (Someone else: who was your granddaddy Captain Wesley Knight. That was on my mother's side. Captain Wesley Knight.

Q: And he had a store at Coal Landing?

A: At Coal Landing. (Someone else: what did he do for a living? Besides the

store?) Well, he was--way back in the 1800's--he was commissioner of revenue, number 2 district. Had two districts then--one and two. And he was commissioner of revenue for number 2 district. Elected back then. (Someone else: did you ever work for him?) I cut railroad ties and hauled them there and he'd bought them. He bought railroad ties. Bought cord wood. (Someone else: what did he do with that?) He shipped them on boats up to Alexandria and Baltimore. (Someone else: you're talking about boats--what kind of boats you talking about?) It's a long boat--what you call a long boat. Bug eyes or schooners, course the Colonel S.A. Graham was the 'Last boat to run regular runs out of here. But the last boat that carried a load of lumber out of here was the Mildred--a three-master. And I carried it down the Creek. I knew the channel real well and the captain let me carry it down as far as Coltrips(?), but he carried it through the drawbridge. What you call the drawbridge--have about 4 inches on each side, you know, and he was a little scared to let me carry it through there. Lester Dickerson(?), a buddy of mine, carried it from Coltrips(?) on out into the river. I've helped him load sea-going barges right there at Coal Landing. You could load them down to 12 foot. Draw 12 foot of water. In 12 foot of water right out in the river. Then you paddly out in the river and then you have to row the barge--carry it out there and put it over on the lower scow, carry it out there and put it on the barge it would go on, a sea-going barge on up the coast.

Q: How late did Aquia Creek navigable to to any extent? Commercially?

A: Well, let's see now. About 60 years ago when they--'20's or '30's, I reckon about then--and that was the last load of lumber at Coal Landing. After that, they run some scows they didn't go up by here- -just with rock on it away from this quarry over here--carried it out of the creek and over--I worked in that quarry.

Q: You did?

(Someone else: what did they mine? What was the type of stone?) Sandstone.

A: (Someone else: Aquia sandstone?) Of course, I know that the company took up tombstones over there and shipped them away to prove that that rock wouldn't crumble when it was surfaced. They were trying to sell the rock, you know. Some of the people said it would crumble after it hit air a long time, it would crumble, so they carried tombstones away from there just to show that it wouldn't crumble, you know.

Q: Old tombstones from the graves?

A: Yes. Right now, I wouldn't let them done it, but then I didn't know no better. And I was running the steam shovel. I was firing a steam shovel and they promised me a 5-cent raise if I keep steam on it. It was an old shovel--it leaked a lot. And I talked to them that day and they told me no, they wasn't going to get that 5-cent raise. Well, it would have been alright if they hadn't promised it to me. But after they promised it to me and wouldn't give it to me, then I quit. And I told them, I said, "You can get a man right now or have one here Saturday, 'cause Saturday will be my last day." About that time, they wanted me to walk around in a mud hole and put some ties which they run on, you know, so I said, "I'm turning my time in now. I quit." And then quite a few years after that, a fella came down here from Washington Post and got me to go over there, show him where the quarry was. And they took my picture standing in the quarry and run it in the Washington Post. And about a year later, I reckon it was, I was on my way to Western State Hospital, I come back, I stopped at a place to eat and a man walked up to me and said, "Oh, you're a publicity dog, ain't you?" I didn't have no idea what he was talking about. But he told me, he said, "I saw your picture in the Washington Post." And he'd seen that picture. It wasn't no publicity stunt at all. This fella just took my picture and put it in the paper. (Someone else: where did you work in the Creek? Did you work for the quarry when you was working on those piles? Or whatever it was?) No, i worked about a month driving the piling down here at the other Bridge. That bridge has been replaced with the bridge that's there now. But my uncle helped to drive the piling 20 years before 1. before I helped to drive it on the piling on another--on the same bridge. Then the piling he had drove 20 years before, it was 65 foot deep and we pulled the piling out of there with pine fat on that piling, just exactly like it was that day he drove 20 years before that. Just exactly like it. Back and all--beat all.

Q: But it stayed under the water?

A: But it stayed right under--when you put it that deep in the mud. And of course, my uncle he was on the train that was robbed by Morgan ... right here at the drawbridge.

Nathanial Mortimer--the same uncle--you know, the one I worked with.

Q: Where was the closest firehouse? What did you do if you had a fire?

A: My house caught on fire and they always said, "If it hadn't been for the slop jar--a full slop jar, the house would have burned down. They threw it on it. Happened to be the nearest firehouse then. (Someone else: how old were you?) Like to scare me to death--I don't know how old I was. 'Cause I know when I come out, stand right on that tombstone and looking up there and flames just running outside that house, you know. And I was just a little fella. Too little to even help. But plenty big enough to be scared. Goodness, I was scared. Of course, Ed Smith, he was a powerful ax man, he run right upstairs, and run into the little room where the fire was and knocked the boards off that was burning. He undoubtedly saved the house. Ed Smith. He...

Q: This was Concord?

A: Concord, yes. (Someone else: he chopped the wall--chopped most of the wall out.) Yeah, yeah. (Someone else: what time of the year was it?) Don't even know what time of the year. (Someone else: they didn't throw snow on it? To put it out?) I don't remember. I don't remember that, no. Of course, it burned a little place twice--and ' had a right good size house that time--but of course, in that little room, you know, to the left of the chimney--stands facing the chimney, the little room upstairs. He knows what was there. (Someone else: what set the fire?) ...Caught from the chimney. Now the chimney--they had a lot of trouble with chimneys back at that time. They built them and they didn't--the mortar that they made and mixed up was no good. Not much more than sand and mud or a good type of clay I believe would have been much better. (Someone else: so they didn't have firehouses then?) No. (Someone else: couldn't have called the firehouse?) No, didn't have a firehouse. They had a firehouse in Fredericksburg. Yeah, they had a firehouse in Fredericksburg and I was standing right in the--and I've seen things like this, exactly like this in the movies--several times since then, but I was at Armstrongs restaurant at Chancellor, place caught fire and Fredericksburg Fire Department come out there and brought their truck, and grabbed a hose and run around the house to where the fire was and in running around the house, they caught that pipe into a fire plug, I'm pretty sure it was a fire plug or something like that and there was seven or eight men pulling on that and there was 4 or 5 more men pulling back just as hard as they could pull trying to get it loose, and of course, I've seen that in the movies several times on comics. I saw that right there. I saw it right there. None of them fellas--I doubt if they are still living so they can't raise much

Hell about it.

Q: Well, do you remember when Stafford County had its first fire department?

A: Its first fire department?

Q: Uh-huh. They have a lot of fire departments now, but...

A: Back in the--early fifties. I'm pretty sure it was in the early fifties.

Q: Long time without it.

A: Yeah, because I told them that I would be a member, but not an active member because I was sheriff then you know, and I couldn't leave the sheriff's duties at a fire although

I let my dispatchers dispatch for them a couple of years.

(A: continued)

They got a little dissatisfied when I told them that if an emergency come up in my office, I'd have to answer it first. Which I doubted would ever come to that where you'd have two real bad emergencies at the same time. But I told them that I'd have to look after my office first, you know. And of course, it saved the county--you know, saved the county thousands of dollars because when you hire a bunch of people that's have to stay right there around the clock, got to have four or five people there at least.

Q: Who was the postmaster/postmistress?

A: Well, the first postmaster I remember beat my daddy out on the job. Daddy was trying to get the job and Daddy was a Republican. Ed Moore, was a Democrat, a good fellow, but he was a close friend of Congressman Smith. A congressman plays a big part in appointments. And he run it--he run the post office a number of years. Well, it was the last of the thirties. And he retired and his clerk took the job. And she come up to the house to get my wife to help her two or three weeks. Because my wife had been carrying the mail and knew something about it. Said she'd like to get her to help her two or three weeks. And of course, my wife went on and worked there then. Worked there--she worked there for twenty-five years. Last 8 years as postmaster. She went there for two or three weeks.

Q: And stayed.

A: Stayed there.

Q: When was the first home delivery of the mail? Do you remember? When you

started to get the mail at home? In the mailboxes ?

A: Let's see--I don't know when they put the first route on, well, it had to be a long time ago. Of course, they carried it in a horse and buggy--the mail from Brooke Station to the courthouse and on up through Roseville before it was ended.

Q: You had a series of post offices all throughout the county, didn't you? Not just one main post office?

A: No, we didn't--and, of course, after we got cars, well then they had the routes then. And my uncle, he drove a '29 Ford, but then mail had been delivered to the post office and it was delivered from house, up the road here, from mailbox to mailbox by horse some. And that was back in the teens, a doubt.

Q: So the mail that got here was delivered through Stafford then by rail?

A: Delivered to Brooke. From Brooke all through Stafford, Garrisonville. I knew the old man who used to ride the horse and carry the mail. I can't remember his name--Bill Franklin(?)--did some because ... lived up there at the end of the route.

Q: Did you ever take an important trip someplace out of the county? An event, or visit, or-

A: No. Just going to get prisoners--just to get prisoners.

Q: But nothing--you and Mrs. MacGregor taking a--

A: Well, I deputized her one time and let her go with me to Miami, Florida, to pick up 5 prisoners. Two girls and three men. I had to carry two matrons and a deputy. And 2 cars to carry--to bring them back. (Someone else: did you ever go on any trips like in the state to the mountains or anywhere like that?)

Q: Too busy working, huh?

A: Yes, I never did take advantage of the free trips that they give you. Never did go on one. They would furnish you money to go on them, you know, on conventions, things like that. (Someone else: did you ever go to the Luray Caverns?) I went there one time when I was just a ... a little before I was married. Oh, about the time I was married. ...Went up there. Had to change a tire. Had a flat tire sitting there while we were in the tavern

and my daddy was, my mother, too, I think, and 5 miles back the same wheel run off--the wheel run off, you know, and I just put it on there myself. My daddy edked me if it was possible that you just rung each one of them lugs? When he stopped, I said, "No, not five of them." And so I drove all the way home slow and figured on getting rid of the car. Wouldn't get another '29 either. I was out there at the courthouse, a little place my brother-in-law run, and I saw a wheel go up through the woods and a car stopped up there, you know. I walked down and it was a '29 Ford. I asked the man, "When did you change that tire?" that was change the wheel on there. They had a wheel bolted right on the back with three bolts. I said, "Where did you change that tire?" He said, "About three or five miles up the road." Then that hub that was bolted right on the back of the car, mud would flu up in there, you know, and it would get real dry. Dust. When you put it up in there and you tighten it up tight, it stays like that. As soon as that wheel starts shaking a little, shake that dust off, come loose. So I was satisfied then, but I watched my hubs after that to be sure they were clean. I know, too, that's what happened.

Q: Do you remember any humorous experiences of your childhood or your young adult days? You might like to share with us?

A: ...(Someone else: who were you dating?) Used to date a lot of gals. One thing that shocked me, you know. We had a garden and I had a 3-cell flashlight. The rabbits was eating our garden up so Dad told me to take that flashlight and go out there and kill the rabbits. And that's what I'd do. Of course, I like to shoot the gun anyway. And I went to the courthouse one night and I was coming back home, stopped right there close to the house. I saw what I thought was 2 rabbits sitting right close together. I shined in their eyes. I thought, "If I had my gun, I'd kill both those rabbits, with one shot." I got a little bit closer to it--it was old ... that scared me to death. I thought, "My gosh."

Q: Were there any characters in this community that--funny stories about people in the community?

Well, Alvin Brooks. Walking up the road there, 631 now, a little slanting there(?) and he was pretty high and he got to staggering and my sister lived there. He fell right through the storm door and scratched the television all up with parts of it and jumped up when she jumped up and hollered and run back out through the door, but he left his hair (hat?). Left his headband-- I found him and I picked him up, hou know, and I asked him, "What was the matter with you?" and he'd heard a lot of people say the lights got in their

eyes, you know, and had car wrecks and all like that blinded and all. He told me the lights blinded him. And he was walking. (Someone else: who was it who sawed the limb out of the tree that time?) That was down at Concord and Bloxton was down there, he was trimming up a big old carpet tree. It was very brittle, but he had a limb out there about 5 inches through and he was righthanded, so he had to get out on the limb and saw with his right hand awhile. He just meant to saw down a little ways, you know, so he could get back and saw it,- balance it off after he got back on the trunk because--he sawed it a little too far and it broke off and he got out on a limb and sawed it off without a doubt we used to tease him about that. He was a real tall fella, too--he was taller than I am--about 6 feet 4. Bumped his head coming in doors and things like that. He'd bump his head on an ordinary door.

Q: Who were the local leaders of the Stafford--do you remember?

A: Leaders in politics?

Q: Politics, the courthouse, and--

A: Well, the winners were the Moncures and the Chichesters, Ashbys, Dan Chichester was a good politician. I don't know why he run for treasurer--didn't beat, he lost. But he could elect most anybody he'd choose to. And of course, I come from a Republican family and a whole lot more so than I was. Dan Chichester, he wanted to... from me when I run for sheriff and I didn't know for sure if I wanted him or not. The way the folks talked about him out here, you know. Of course, I finally went over there and he and I got along with him real well. And he didn't do a single thing crooked that I know of at no time. That Moncures--Frank Moncure, he was my buddy, real buddy. And he run against Lawrence Curtis, which was our school teacher and maybe, I wanted Curtis to win that time and my daddy, he voted for Curtis. Of course, Frank got beat that time. He went to California, didn't like it out there or else came back here for some reason, he come on back here. And we made friends--without a doubt we made good friends. I mean my daddy, he thought the world of Frank Moncure. And of course, Frank, he won the next election. Was in the House of Delegates.

Q: What was the name of this area you lived in? You know, you had Ruby(?), and Glend'e(?) and White Oak and--?

A: Courthouse.

Q: This is Courthouse?

A: Courthouse, Brook Station,, Coal Landing gang--...one of them. Of course, 4 or 5 others. (Someone else: Coal Landing gang? Gangs--run around with

gangs?) With Dickersons. No, we didn't roam around or nothing. Sometimes we go to the courthouse, something like that. (Someone else: have any fights?)used to have some fights once in awhile.

Q: Would the Coal Landing gang take care of the Widewater gang or the White Oakers?

A: One time at the Brook Station--I threw the boys out. Kind of more accidentally than anything else. He had a flashlight and a pint of whiskey in his back pocket and he bent the flashlight up and broke the pint of whiskey. And I think breaking the pint of whiskey made him kind of mad. He got up a gang--they were going to run me away from there. Of course, at first I thought I would run and after I thought about it, I'm not going to run. I might get beat, but I wasn't going to run. And so, the gang come in the court--the schoolhouse. I was in the schoolhouse eating a slice of pie and they walked over to me. And when the boy carrying the flashlight got to me, well they were still coming in the door. And he asked me if I broke that flashlight and I told him, "I wasn't sure, but if that's the one that boy had in his pocket, I reckon I did." And he said, "Well, he don't get \$1.35 every night to pay for a flashlight," and I told him, "You think you can get it out of my skin, step in it." Well, that was all that was said and done.

Q: Didn't say anything about the pint of whiskey, did he?

A: No. Didn't say anything. I got into a scrap, a lot of scraps--I went to a place up at Garrisonville. A boy--preacher's son, carried me up there and my buddy. He went on and carried a girl home and we were walking on down the road Another boy was mad about a girl who was there and he was cussing and carrying on and I made the remark, you know, my girlfriend or one of my sisters had been there, I might have challenged him, you know, but he was a bully around here. Whipped everybody that he got tangled up with, you know. I thought he'd whip me, but I would fight him anyway. Went out there and he asked if Alaric MacGrego in the gang. We was all walking along. I said yes. He said, "I understand hou said you would thrash me." I said, "No, I never said I'd thrash you." And he came over and

grabbed hold of me and tried to throw me down. I had a cold chill come over me a little bit 'cause you know, I thought I was going to get whipped. And when he reached up to my throat like that I got him by the hand. When I caught him by the hand, I pulled his hand down and I knew then if I could pull his hand like that, I could whip him easily. So with the cold chills running over me, a little hot flash hit, but I pushed him back and hit him a lot harder than I would've hit him if I hadn't thought I had to. And as soon as I hit him, I saw his feet go about two feet off the ground. I was looking at the soles of his shoes. Then we walked on down the road and that boy carried us up there, he caught us, you know, and said, "What happened to Ralph up there?" And I told him I had to hit him one time. But that scrap won a lot of scraps for me, you know. I like to fight, there was no doubt about that, but I wasn't going to start one. Daddy had been sheriff and all and thought it was a disgrace to fight about a gal and all like that, you know. I wasn't going to start nothing, but I just love to end them.

Q: Back when you were a child, did you have any money to spend?

A: When. I was nine years old, another boy and I used to haul some minnows in and sell them for a penny a piece, you know, and the most I made in one day for the first 15 years was \$11 and then of course, the other days was maybe five or ten cents. And after I got so I could cut with an axe real good, I made 20-cents an hour. And--- (Someone else: railroad ties or--) Yeah, cut railroad ties--the same man I was telling you about blowing his shirt(?) for 2 miles, he used hew ties and I scored them. And that was half a... and he would tell me, "Watch that axe, watch that axe, don't let the axe slip out of your hand." I was up in front of him, you know, hewing with the cutting axe, I mean scoring with a cutting axe. He was hewing a broad axe behind me, you know, right behind me. And I thought, "Well, what is my axe for?" He must be crazy if he thinks I am going to lose my axe. Went on then about 10 years later, I was scoring behind a fella and the axe come by me. And I thought of old Haskell(?) right then--... that's the reason he was yelling. So I looked up and I told that boy, "The next time that axe comes down here, I said, "If you haven't got the hammer in your hand, I'm coming after you with this broad axe." (Someone else: how many could you do up in a day? How many ties?) Well, I don't know how many could have hewed out, you know, but I do know that for about a month, I would hew about 22 to 34 ties and I helped to score them marked them all, and cooked for 23 men, and fish at night. And I don't have no idea that I could get 10 men to do that now. (Someone else: how much did you get for the railroad ties a piece?)

25-cente. The smallest one was 25-cents, I know that. What they call number one, but I forgot what you call it, was 79, but I've been in the woods with a 79 on my shoulder and took a 6-inch down under my arm and brought it out. (Someone else: how long were they?) 81/2 feet. A lot of times I used to think, you know, that my buddies were trifle lazy, but I know now they couldn't lift it.

Q: Where did you get your strength from? Always working?

A: Hard working. My mama used to cook breakfast. Any table now that would sit for five or six wouldn't have a bit more on it than I eat for breakfast. She had pancakes as big as the table. A platter full of beef when they had beef. A platter full of it, i could eat all the... then she'd cook up for the others after I left 'cause I never did get up real early and go to work when I was on the farm, but I'd work until 10 o'clock at night.

Q: You were never overweight, were you? You were never heavy.

A: The only time that I was overweight was when I was sheriff last four years I was in there. I weighed 251 1/2 pounds--I think that the most I ever did weigh. And of course, my weight--I should weight about 190 I reckon, 85, 90 right now.

Q: You must have worked it off.

A: Yeah, I worked it off. I always said you know eating won't hurt you if you just--and working won't hurt you either if you work hard. ...Exercising that Dickerson boy that run that boat with me, you know, him and I, I was born the 27th of August... and he was born the 16th or 17th--I was ten days older than he was. And I knew I could whip him. I didn't know he was going to be the best man that I ever tangled with in my lifetime. Never did tangle with another one stronger than he was. (Someone else: did you all have plenty to eat in the depression?) Yes. One year, my mama put up 134 gallons of tomatoes. We raised them. Never did have them last until tomatoes come again. And all the other people talk about pints and quarts was like that ... and she talked about gallons and that was the way it was. She could make things go a long way. 'Cause we didn't have no money, but we never--I don't remember ever being hungry.

Q: Of course, you raised a lot of your food?

A: Yeah, we raised a lot of our food.

Q: What was the depression like? Here? Was there much effect on the people in Stafford?

A: I tell you, I got bread(?) one time for about 2 months. C.C. Camps(?) and things. I didn't think much of it. I mean I know that the president had to do that. Of course, he was a--Roosevelt was a Democrat and I didn't vote for him, but my grandfather--if you walked up to him and said you were a Democrat, you just as well as put yourself down 'cause he was going to lay you down(?). He couldn't get you any lower. And of course, I wasn't that kind of a party man and I don't believe in that kind of a party man. A man should bring his party up to the election and that should be for his country.

Q: But that's the way it used to be, back in the old days.

A: Roosevelt, he had to get the money in circulation to keep people from falling in debt. And he paid boys to pick up rocks and carry them over and lay them down and then pick them up and carry them back and lay them down. Right then, I used to talk about it, I thought it should be building a battleship. Should have been building a battleship. Building the best one in the world. And if we had too many, sink the oldest one and build another one. That would get money in circulation.

Q: Yes, it would.

A: And he keep them, you know, folks--Roosevelt did things I certainly didn't like it. And why was all of our ships at Pearl Harbor right under the Japanese nose when they were threatening us, you know? Why in earth...

Q: That's a question a lot of people are beginning to ask.

A: That beat all. And Kennedy--I think Kennedy was one of the smartest presidents we ever had. I'm not qualified to judge a president, I'm sure of that, you know, but he-and then he did one of the foolish things, I think, the Bay of Pigs. Sending people over there to get killed. He just might just as well shot 'em--wouldn't have been as much trouble.

Q: Mr. MacGregor, let's talk about some of the ships and things on the Creek here. Can you tell us some of the captains that you knew?

A: Yes, Captain Ben Dickerson and Captain John Flippo, Captain Pete

MacGregor, Nathaniel Mortimer, and Captain Bennett, and Captain Wesley Knight. And a lot of the boats got to wreck in Aquia Creek. One of them, that was wrecked before my time, but I--parts of it lay out of the water so you could see it, for many years. You can't see any of it now, but always for fifty years, you could see the side of the old Mill Boy and then they had the Texacola(?)--Captain Ben Dickerson bought her and then he sold her to Captain John Flippo. She went to wreck right up there right across the Creek from Coal Landing. Mary Ann Shay you can see her on low water laying right off of Concord. And the Peeri(?) was wrecked right on the shores of Coal Landing. The Three Sisters they were what was a long boat, Five Sisters was a long boat, Three Sisters--you can see some of her now on low tide. Back in about 1900 or a little before, Mr. Flatford built a boat and named it after his, one of his sons and his oldest girl--Lillian Howard--that was the name of this excursion boat and freight boat. She carried actually freight, too, and carried to Alexandria or Baltimore, Washington. And we had bigger boats than that. That was a steam boat, called Fortuna, and I don't know where she went to wreck. I don't think she's in Aquia Creek. They cleared her out. That run freight out of here like lumber and ties, cordwood, poplar wood, pulp wood, and excelsior wood. She was owned by Captain Jenkins. Captain Jenkins from Colonial Beach. Had two bugeyes that belonged to my uncle. One of them was the Tony Frost and the other was the Roberts. And of course, I went up the river on the Tony Frost. Was the only trip that I ever took on them boats, was on the Tony Frost and I was 7 years old. Of course, later on, I helped to load many a one of them with railroad ties and lumber, wood. I helped load sea-going barges. If you wasn't drawing over 12 feet of water, you could come into Aquia Creek then right up to the Coal Landing, and load. You load the barge down so she wouldn't draw but 12 foot then you take a yawl(?) boat, a small tug and load it in the river about... feet deep of water and then take the ties and lumber and stuff and put it on a scow and go out there and finish loading her down so she could go up to Baltimore and go up the coast--

Q: What was most of the cargo that was loaded?

A: Well, there was lumber--mostly is was lumber. Had a lot of ties and a lot of pine wood--they called it excelsior wood and then the poplar and gum were called pulp wood. And of course, the bulk of wood was firewood. Used to run a lot of that. Back about in 1920, they didn't run as

much of that wood towards the last. I don't know if it was replaced with coal or why they didn't use so much of it towards the last. Went to the excelsior wood. (Someone else: how did it measure in cords?) 128 foot is a short cord, I think. Four by four by eight--yeah, four foot high, four foot long and--four foot wide--eight foot long and four foot wide. That was 128 foot. That's called a short cord. And a long was 5 foot long, or 5 foot wide and 8 foot long and 4 foot high. I don't remember now exactly what-how many feet was in a long cord. (Someone else: what--Captain Knight--when he took his ships--ran his ships, where did he--he'd send lumber and stuff out, but he'd bring stuff back, wouldn't he?) Yes, he run a store at Coal Landing and he bought most all his stock back from Alexandria. Most of his dealing, he did with Alexandria. Of course, he went to Baltimore occasionally with a load of stuff. But mostly he run to Alexandria. He dealt a whole lot with L.A. Clark. Alexandria. ...Clark got some kind of Crosote outfit down here in Spotsylvania now. (Someone else: that's true. What did he bring back--what kind of stuff did he bring back for the store?) Well, sugar and flour, molasses, coffee, and soft drinks. (Someone else: you ever help him unload any of it?) Yes, yes, I've helped him unload stock for the store (Someone else: what about fertilizer?) I helped Captain Ben Dickerson. He used to go up and down for my grandfather after my grandfather stopped running his boat. He just runned the store. And I worked for him unloading Captain Ben Dickerson's boat. And of course we used to get Daddy--would get a barrel of black strap--bring it down on the boat. Of course, all of them liked it right well, some people won't eat it now. But I like black strap. I believe it's good for you. (Someone else: what about the fertilizer? Didn't you help unload the fertilizer?) Yeah, fertilizer, yeah. Old guano fertilizer. Come in a 200-pound bag. That's just exactly what they were--200-pound bag. Brought 'em down in the hold of the boat where we would heist them out of the hold of the boat with block and fall(?) and then a man would take them right off the block and fall and walk up a skid pole into the warehouse. And my uncle and I were there one day-- Captain Ben Dickerson was there and my daddy and Barney Sega Wesley Knight,

my uncle he was all the time trying to tease somebody, you know,
and of course, he was grunting when he picked that 200 pounds up and I come
I said, "What're you grunting about?" I was just a little under seventeen.
He said, "This thing here," and I said, "I can carry two of them." "Oh, no,"
he said, "you can't carry two of them." I said, "Heist them out the hold,"
and when they brought them up there, I took two of them and walked up that
skid pole with them, laid them in the warehouse and, of course, all of them
are dead now, but they'd told you back at that time. The other thing I did,
I went up on a pole, right across the creek from here at the quarry--110
feet tall. Went right up that pole and stood on my head right on top of that
pole. And I've got witnesses to prove that today--two witnesses, I know,
are still living.

Q: Was that a dare or why did you do that?

A: No, I, of course, people down there fishing, I didn't even know--I
didn't even know Billy Gordon was down there until here about ten years ago, when he
asked me if I could
stand on my head on a pole now. Of course, I stood on my feet on that pole, too. But I
wouldn't even
climb that pole today. (Someone else: we didn't believe it until somebody used to come
down and
asked us about it. They asked us if he ever told us about it and started laughing and said,
"Yeah, we
heard about it." They said they saw it.) ... Billy Gordon. He was out there and saw it
when I did it.
of course, there was a lot of people, but I don't remember who there were. But I wouldn't
had him done
it for nothing on the face of the earth. I have confidence in myself, but nobody else.
Yeah,
self-confidence, that's all you need to do most anything--do most anything.

Q: Can you describe some of the different ships? Tell us about them and what
they were used for or the long boat? What did it look like?

A: A long boat is a boat that I believe would carry maybe 50 or 60 cords of
wood. That's loading it in the hold and on the deck. Now the bug ... was a small boat and
sharp at
each end. And would carry about 35 cords of wood. They--my uncle had two of them--
they were about the
same size. The Peeri(?) went to wreck. I didn't see her until after she was wrecked. I don't
know
what she could have carried. (Someone else: the Peeri--didn't they dig it up when Aquia
Harbor came in?)
Yeah, Aquia Harbor come in. They dug up most of the Peeri 'cause they wanted to put
that drag line

ashore(?) over there. Some of the old timbers laying out there now. (Someone else: the long boat was the same as the schooner, wasn't it?) Yeah, about the same as a schooner. It's bow was sharp bow and the bugeye come back with a sharp bow and stein. (Someone else: how long was the longest ship?) No, I don't remember. Of course, the biggest one like that that went out of here was the Mildred, a three-master--two-master. (Someone else: when they brought them, could they turn them around when they brought them up the creek? How far did they go up in Aquia Creek?) Well, they had to dig a place out there to Coal Landing and they called it the Basin, to turn them around in. They could turn around there, but you had a whole lot of trouble, couldn't of went just a little ways and back. The--I can't think of it--they dredged the creek when I was about 4 or 5 years old. That was about 75 years ago. My daddy, he was a night watchman on the machine that run at night, night and day, what you call a boring machine, same type that they use now, a whole lot like it and they had what they'd called the mud dipper. That was a clam shell on a scow and they dug that still... basin in there then for the boats to turn around. And of course, here now about 4 or 5 years ago, they dredged this creek out again to six foot, ninety foot wide channel, 6 foot of water.

Q: What was the reason for dredging it now?

A: Well, Aquia Harbor, they--when they built up there, they wanted to have a place where they could take care of some right-good-sized boats, yachts. So they're the ones had it dredged out.

Q: No commercial shipping anymore on Aquia Creek?

A: No, no. No. the last thing they carried out of Aquia Creek regular shipping, was the Storm(?). Of course, ... Mildred was the last load of lumber that went out of this creek.

Q: I'll bet you miss the ships, don't you?

A: Huh?

Q: You miss the ships, don't you?

A: Yeah, yes, yes, indeed. Well, they were the main things when I was a kid.

Q: Did you have any skip jacks?

A: That's a small boat, isn't it? I believe it's just a small boat.

Q: Uh, huh.

A: And I don't think it carries freight. (Someone else: they might not call it--I think Milton(?) might have called it skip jack. Yeah, yeah, it might be smaller sailing boat. I would think, maybe.

Q: Did any of the ships ever leak?

A: Leak?

Q: Uh, huh.

A: Well, my uncle, Wesley Knight, he told me that when he slept, you sleep with a bunk that is about 12 or 14 inches off the bottom of the boat. On each side of the boat--on each side of the cabin, where you have bunks. Some of them, you had two very close to the floor and then two over top of that. Four people could sleep in them alright. And Wesley Knight told me he slept on many a night with his foot on the floor. He slept on the bottom bunk. Slept with his foot out on the floor so when the water come in and got his foot wet, wake him up, he'd get up and pump the boat out. And he said he pumped all the water in the Potomac River through that old boat three or four times. (Someone else: how'd he pump it? How'd you pump it out?) Supposed to be two of these old pumps over here when you pump out about a four-inch pump-- about that size, you pumped by hand and it was a job pumping them, too. But they were about 4 inches round, 3-4 inches through and about 8 foot long. You had to go down in the hold and then pump water over the side of the boat. (Someone else: you ever pump any?) Oh, yes, I've pumped. I've pumped some, but not on a trip--right near the Coal Landing. (Someone else: ... that time you saw it was going to sink. That one time, didn't you?) Well, that--I used to oyster down at Dahlgren(?) and go down there every week. And Lesley Dickerson and I was oystering and we was running a dead rise(?) folks called an old miler(?)--

27 foot long coming back up the river on our last trip into Coal, course ice all around the shore, we got caught in a storm. I think that was the last time I got scared. Stay scared and stay scared a long time. But I could swim just as good as anybody in the country, but there was ice all in the water and I'd had to clumb over ice about 1-2 mile to get to shore, so I knew nobody could've stand this, you know, so I thought I was a goner. And we had a cullin bowl, thing like a trough with both ends knocked out of it and it laid, extended over the boat, over the sides of the boat on both sides. Got in that storm, got to dipping water over the cabin, well, I pushed that cullin boat over against the cabin and the water over the cabin run into the cullin bowl and run back over the boat. If I'd moved that cullin bowl in 5 minutes, she'd have sunk. I knowed she'd have sunk in five minutes. And we were down there pretty close to Portobacco Bay and I talked to Lesley about it you know, and I said, "We were going to Portobacco Bay," and he said he thought so too, you know, we'd rather went to shore up at Cedar Point. And she kept dipping getting in water over the side a little bit, you know, he wasn't holding it right in the wind and we had--I had to--I had the engine wide open so I told Lesley, I said, "Hold it in the wind. I don't care where we go just so we stay on top of the water." He said, "I'm doing the best I can. She ain't got steering play,," and that sounded some kind of bad to me 'cause I had the motor wide open and she was wallowing and if the motor had cut off, she'd have sunk in a few minutes, I knew that's true. Finally, we got ashore and stayed there that night. I slept right on that mattress. We laid a mattress on the floor, sleep on it, you know. It got soaking wet, but that was alright, I was ashore anyway. Then the next morning, wasn't enough water left on the flats(?)--we had to-- we towed 16 bushels of oysters to shore--put them ashore and then pushed the boat out at 4 o'clock that evening. Pushed the boat out to get enough water and then towed them oysters back out and put on them. They was right off Mathias Point Lighthouse. We come on up Maryland side and we saw one of the best schooners come up the river--the Matadean(?) and she went around Maryland Point, she swung around and come in behind Maryland Point and anchored. It was too rough for her. So we, she was running oysters, so we pulled up beside her and a buddy who was with me, his brother was on her, he worked for the captain of the Matadean and he bought the oysters we had. That lightened us up some and we come across the river that night just before dark, made it alright, anyway, got scared and that was all. (Someone else: how much did you get for a bushel of oysters, do you remember?) Dollar and a quarter.

Q: I'll bet you were glad to get home, weren't you?

A: Well, that'd been a whole lot I've been in that boat, you know, night and day many a night and day and sighed for seven seasons right out of that same boat and why, of course, a lot of the boys they seemed to be a little scared to run right up here in the creek, but I made

up my mind it wasn't going to scare me anymore. When she sunk, I went down, couldn't find her no where at all, swam back up, water was where she sunk now and I thought she--a boat will live under bad circumstances if you handle right. I've been out there in some bad storms since then, but we came on board that time, I thought we was coming on up there for the last time. Lesley said, "I'm not going out no more, but it wasn't long before he was in a boat and gone.

Q: Back out again, right?

A: Right.

Q: Did they ever build any ships here in Stafford County?

A: Well, the one I was talking about, I meant to say that Flatford's Lillian Howard(?), that was a boat that was build right here at Coal Landing. Built by Mary Knisley's grandfather. And named after her daddy and his oldest sister, Lillian Howard, it was Howard who was her father. That's the only one that I know of being built--only small boats--they built a lot of them.

Q: You didn't help build it, did you?

A: Help build them? No, no. The Lillian Howard was built a little before my time. (Someone else: and it was a steamship? What kind of ship was it?) It was a steamship, I'm sure. Steamship. The old... was a steamship and that was the one running in and out of here about the same time as the Lillian Howard was and she runned after they built the Lillian Howard, run some. (Someone else: was it a paddle wheel?) No, no, it wasn't a paddle wheel, I don't remember, it might have been now. Might have been, but I don't think the Lillian Howard was, I'm pretty sure. (Someone else: well, how about when you went to Alexandria?) I was seven years old then. And my uncle and my daddy and I was the only ones on the boat (TAPE HAD TO BE TURNED OVER) ...

and when he hollered to let it down, and he was--I was standing right by the wheel right in the stern, but I was figuring on if that boat sunk, the mast would still stick out of the water, I felt sure of that and I figured on I was going up that rigging. I don't know if I'd done it or not, but that's what I had in my mind. I was going up that rigging and if the boat was sitting up, I'd go on top of the water, but when he and my uncle hollered "lower the jib", it was hung and Daddy couldn't get it down. Other people out there helped him get it down, but that boat was really going. When they finally got it down, she

was-- water was coming out over the load of lumber, and that was about 3 foot high on the deck on the lower side--the lower side. I know it was in the spring of the year because we had a mess of garden peas, or English peas, some people call them, we had them on the stove cooking and turned it all over in the bunk. The bunk was right beside the stove, you know. That was about the only reason I can remember exactly what time of the year it was. I knew it wasn't real cold. (Someone else: and didn't you stop somewhere and take water? Get water on the way to Alexandria?) Yeah, there's a place up there used to get water right out the river. Get your drinking water out it, 55 gallon barrel. All the boats had them on there. Had a barrel or two barrels and sit at a certain place up there, they'd fill the water up and drink it. Potomac River.

Q: Not today.

A: ...

Q: Just out of curiosity, you know anything about the Crow's Nest? Didn't that go down off of Accokeek?

A: No, no, it--was sold. (Someone else: she's talking about--some people say the Crow's Nest was a ship. You don't remember--do you remember anything about it?)

Q: The Crow--it became the Crow's Nest. You don't remember anything about it?

A: No, of course, a lot of boats have got a crow's nest on them. It's up at the top of some of the sails. They've got a place where a lot of them stayed. That is called a crow's nest.

Q: Well, I had always heard that there was a ship the Crow and that's why the property was named the Crow's Nest. And then, it sunk. Why did most of these boats sink out here in Aquia Creek? Storms?

A: Oh, they just let them--just docked them there and let them go to waste. They did away with that kind of freight hauling, you know, and that's what it was. Lack of work--that was the reason.

Q: Loss of market?

A: Loss of market. (Someone else: Captain Knight couldn't get any help during the war, could he? He lost some... men, didn't he? Did you tell me that? Somebody told me that.) He, well, it was during the war and a little after World War I that they stopped using it--of

course, waterways used to be mostly all the freight and then they shifted to trains, which they had
trains through--shipped mostly on trains and then trucks come along. Well, that put the boat out all
together.

Q: Boats... Well, is there anything else you can think of? That you'd like to share with us about the creek down here?

A: This place used to be good for duck hunting and bass fishing. It's getting back to bass fishing a little bit now. Ain't no ducks around here except the ones we raise. People do try to kill them.

Q: Wasn't that the lower part of what's now Aquia Harbor--wasn't that a game preserve?

A: Yes ... and got the Board of Supervisors to make it an open season--no, closed season on pheasant. He was going to raise pheasants, but turned a lot of them loose, but they--then they charged us so much, you know, to come in and guarantee you could kill about one or two a season for about \$20 a day, I think. But they didn't hang around so didn't amount to much.

Q: So the ducks that are still out there, you've been tending them, huh?

A: Huh?

Q: You've been tending the ducks out there?

A: Well, I used to kill ducks way back yonder when I was about 20 years old. Plenty of ducks around here then.

Q: Not too many anymore, are there?

A: No, no, we've raised twice as many as in the whole entire creek now.

Q: Well, thank you very much, Mr. MacGregor.