Gary Cooke

A surveyor by profession, Gary Cooke, son of Virginia Fines Sullivan of White Oak, has devoted much of his adult life to researching his Indian background. Gary, 55, grew up in the White Oak area of Stafford County which is the recognized home of many of the local families who claim descent from the Patawomeck Indians.

The accepted story is that John Smith found Indians four hundred years ago as he explored around what is called today Marlborough Point. He had apparently come upon a settlement of the Patawomecks. English settlers came during the 17th century and the two cultures merged through time, proximity and marriage—

Gary and his mother Virginia trace their English heritage back to Major William Newton among others. Their Indian heritage is harder to pin down because there was no written language but through oral history they grew up knowing they had Indian ancestors. When Virginia Sullivan was a young woman, being an Indian descendant was something you knew about yourself, but did not necessarily readily share with others. Gary has taken the next step. He is Indian and he can tell you about it.

Suzanne Willis and Nancy Bruns from the Oral History Project have been interviewing Virginia Fines Sullivan and Gary Cooke to understand the story. (See 2007 interview with Mrs. Sullivan.) Unlike other Indian tribes in Virginia, the Patawomeck descendants do not have tribal recognition from the state.

Interviewer: One of my first questions would be did coming from the Indian culture make you feel any different or did you notice differences as a young boy.

Mr. Cooke: The answer to that would be that we spent our whole lives in the woods. How would you rate yourself,compared to anybody else when you have no access to anybody else? As a young kid, I did that which I did and I had no nobody to compare it to. You just live your own culture.

I cannot remember not being in the woods. Our whole lives were spent in the woods. And we knew everybody every where so if you were walking through the woods even if you got temporarily misplaced you were going to come out at somebody's house that you knew and they would send you back home.

Interviewer: Now you are talking about right here (in White Oak)?

Mr. Cooke: This was all fields around here and the woods were about 15 acres over there and there were about 500 acres over there. It's not still woods. It's houses, but my great grandmother owned the farm originally. She was Virginia Stevens and she had been Virginia Newton who was a Potts. She owned the woods originally–about 500 acres. The Newtons owned about 350 acres adjoining her.

Do you know where D.P.'s museum is? I would walk from here over there and in the woods all around.

Interviewer: The museum is the former White Oak School. Is that the school you attended?

Mr. Cooke: Yes, I went there five years but I took the school bus.

Interviewer: And what time period are we talking about?

Mr. Cooke: I was born Dec. 21, 1951, so I started to the White Oak School off Newton Road in the 1956–57 year.

Interviewer: Was there a river or a creek around here?

Mr. Cooke: Just streams. But there was always somebody in the woods. There were people walking around –talking to each other.

Interviewer: Then after White Oak School you went to...

Mr. Cooke: Gari Melchers. I went to the sixth grade there. Then that changed to Gayle School. That was actually Gayle Junior High with a campus type of setting.

That school was right behind Gari Melchers' (home) and I went there for two years and

then to the old Stafford High that was near Ralph's Grill.

Interviewer: Are we talking about present day Drew?

Mr. Cooke: Yes, that is Drew. And Ralph's Grill was a little stone structure right opposite the Knights of Columbus. I think the building is still there, but I don't know what use is made of it.

When I went to school Brown's Motel was right across from the school.

(It was Berberg's Motel earlier Mrs. Sullivan said.)

Interviewer: What stands out about high school.

Mr. Cooke: I guess we were a strange bunch of people. We liked being called the Indians. (Laughter)

They were called the Stafford Indians.

Interviewer: The sports teams?

Mr. Cooke: The teams were the Stafford Indians. We fought for it. The tribe fought for it when they were trying to take it out of the school.

We said we will take offense if you take it out of the school. We are Indians and it is our school. We went there.

And I am not offended by the word Indian. It is what I am. I am not a native American because that is a misnomer –everyone who is born here is a native American.

Interviewer: That's a good way to look at it.

Mr. Cooke: Indian is cool.

Interviewer: So all sports teams are Indians at Stafford High School.

Mr. Cooke: That's right and I think before that was Stafford High School that was Falmouth High School. (He turns to his mother, Mrs. Sullivan, to check that.)

Mrs. Sullivan: Falmouth Elementary was Brooks Park and Falmouth High School was up where Gari Melchers was. That's where I went to high school.

Mr. Cooke: Okay. I always assumed that was the old high school.

Mrs. Sullivan: It was a small high school. Bill Bolton was the principal most of the time up there.

Interviewer: Are any of your friends still around? Did they all move away?

Mr. Cooke: Basically the people from White Oak do not move away.

Interviewer: White oak people don't go too far do they?

Mr. Cooke: No. We don't go too far at all.

But we don't see as much of each other. I guess we are all busy.

Interviewer: I want to explore when you became aware of being an Indian.

Mr. Cooke: I was always aware I was an Indian. We did not talk about it because why would you talk about being an Indian. I was told from the time I was old enough to understand that I was an Indian. But the idea of going out and talking with other people about it--- we didn't talk to other people about much of anything that went on in White Oak.

Interviewer: I was thinking about when this awareness of your heritage became a more public thing. I've been reading about the Indian tribes in Virginia and it seems to me that you were kept under wraps. But I want to know more...

Mr. Cooke: Actually we had a conversation with Gladys who is my grandmother's sister. That's something you'll find out about down here. Anytime you talk to somebody down here you are introduced or referenced to somebody who is kin to you by sisters only.

And that's how you know you can talk to them.

Interviewer: You mean you know you can trust them?

Mr. Cooke: Yes.

Interviewer: Who was Gladys?

Mr. Cooke: She was Gladys Newton Bourne, my Grandmother Fines' sister. Married to Henry Bourne.

She must have been born about 1900 or 1905. She told that when she was younger they told her not to talk about being Indian because she might not be able to go to the white school.

Interviewer: The Plecker regulation seems to have been in effect from about 1912 for many years.

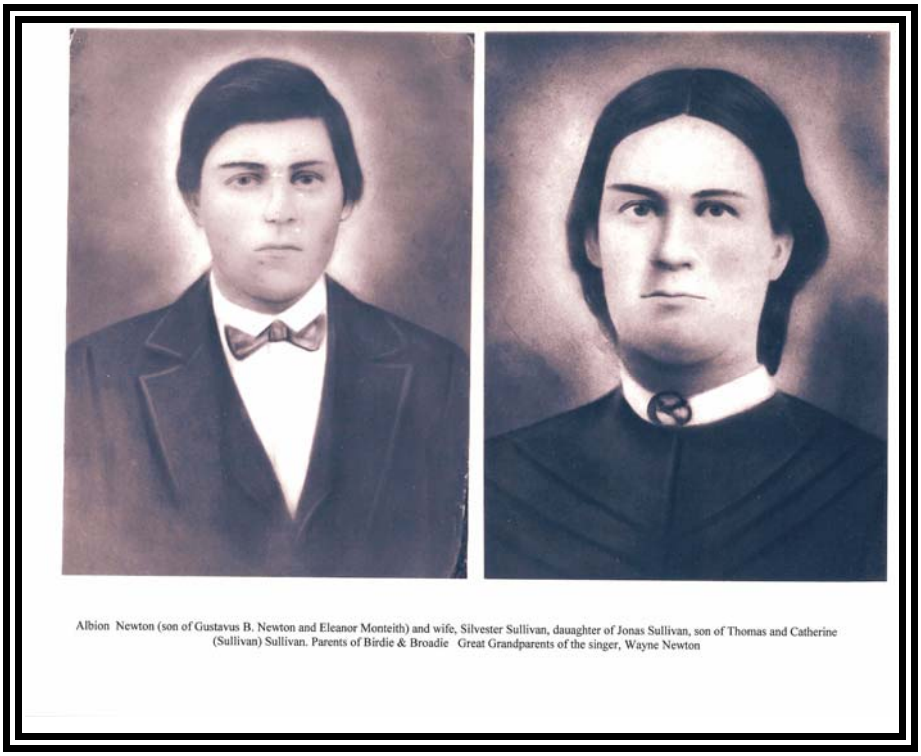
Mr. Cooke: When Luther (Newton) talked to Frank G. Speck (noted anthropologist who studied Indian people early in the 20th century), it was said he was ostracized because they were afraid we might get kicked out of schools if people realized we were Indians.

Interviewer: It does say here in this booklet that county clerks, hospital administrators and school officials and others were told to be aware of those claiming Indian ancestors.

Mr. Cooke: When Speck came here and was talking to Luther (Newton), he also went over to talk to the Greens who lived next door.

Joseph Green had married one of the Newton girls whose mother was a Green. But that's another whole story.

I guess after that we just never talked about it to people outside. We still had a lot of contact with other Indians. Particularly the Mattaponi and Pamankey. Every Dog Mart they would come up here and they would come to White Oak to visit us. They didn't call us the Patowmecks then. They called us the Newton Indians.



Albion Newton (son of Gustavus B. Newton and Eleanor Monteith) and wife, Silvester Sullivan, dauaghter of Jonas Sullivan, son of Thomas and Catherine (Sullivan) Sullivan. Parents of Birdie & Broadie Great Grandparents of the singer, Wayne Newton

Interviewer: The time you are talking about is in the 60's?

Mrs. Sullivan: The time he's talking about is when the Dog Mart was at Hurkamp Park. I used to run a booth there for the PTA at White Oak School.

Interviewer: When I first came to Fredericksburg in the 1970's I remember being so excited about going to the Dog Mart.

Mr. Cooke: We used to go to see them at the Dog Mart and they (the Mattaponis) would come see us here at White Oak. But the chief of the Mattaponi O.T. Custalow married Elizabeth Newton who is Albion Newton's granddaughter. My grandmother's mother was Birdie Newton and she married William Tobias Newton... Birdie Newton was the daughter of Silvestra Nee Sullivan and Albion Newton. (Albie alternate name). Birdie Newton's brother was Brodie Newton father of Elizabeth Newton. He (O.T. Custalow)

come to White Oak to the school and give a war dance and made the teacher (Mrs. Robinson) faint.

Mrs. Sullivan: Mrs. Robinson was Indian herself but she was from Harrisburg, PA.

Mr. Cooke: Chief Custalow was a big man doing a lot of jumping around. (All are laughing.)

She fainted and the kids all laughed at her.

We have had some times with the Pamukeys and the Mattaponi. They always come up and fish with us and the Rappahannocks too.

Interviewer: I am getting mixed up. You are Patawomecks not Rappahannocks. You are not a recognized tribe. Why is it that you aren't recognized if the others are recognized?

Mr. Cooke: Why are we not recognized is a good question. It is the most political process I have ever seen in my life.

They all know who we are. They don't dispute who we are. But we don't have a Bible record saying who we are. Indians don't keep written records. We've never kept records. We can put all the pieces together and we now have William and Mary people and they are helping us put it all pieces together properly. Helen Roundtree from Old Dominion University wrote a book and she didn't have our proof and she left us out of her book...

Interviewer: It takes a law? It has to go through the Virginia legislature?

Mr. Cooke: Yes. Bill Howell put the bill in and then we asked to have it pulled until we could get our proof together (in the proper way for presentation).

Interviewer: But how did this awareness come on you all to do something–to prove your heritage?

You all had been doing just fine. You knew who you were.

Mr. Cooke: Roughly in l997, everyone knew I was descended from the Indians and they asked me to do a talk over to Marlborough Point about what I knew and I talked about everything I knew about the Indians and the families and the history of White Oak. This was actually before the tribe had come back together.

Interviewer: But how did you know that. Did you go out and gather it or did it just pour out from what you had absorbed over the years?

Mr. Cooke: History of the Patowmecks?

I have researched that tremendously. I can tell you that all of the land we call White Oak–our main migration into what we call White Oak today–when we bought the Newton

land–came in 1837.

Interviewer: That is amazing. Are you saying that you all crossed the river and settled here at the same time?

Mr. Cooke: No. The village across the river (Marlborough Point) is properly called Patowmeck. We had another village on the other side of the river called Passamatanzy. That's where the Passamatanzy Post Office is. That's not too far from the actual village site. A lot of people come from Passamatanzy.

We might have been at Patowmeck proper at one time but as things got crowded we moved back into Passamatanzy. At the time, I think it was 1680 or 1690, there was a little parcel of land on Indian Cabin Branch that the Monteiths, the Greens and the Lundsfords were living on. That is the only Indian Cabin Branch I have ever found. There were other families. And then we moved right straight up 218 and bought this land around White Oak Church. I have plats of that. This was 1837.

The reason that was done was that Mr. Fitzhugh-- The Mr. (William) Fitzhugh who owned the big house. Those Fitzhughs. They settled up one of those estates and his two daughters, Annie Fitzhugh and one another, owned that property and we bought up all of their lands.

And that's how we ended up here together again.

Some of us were sitting right over where the Newton tract was-- where the Fall Hill Plantation is-- because that was Newton land and that's the Newtons we descend from.

Interviewer: Fall Hill Plantation?

Mr. Cooke: I mean Little Falls Plantation (Major William Newton's place on Rt. 3 East) and he owned about 1,000 acres and he gave it to his kids. And John Newton married Nancy Butler and she was the daughter of William Butler and that was what brought the Indians into the Newton line so far as I know it.

Interviewer: Through the Butlers?

Mr. Cooke: Through the Butlers. The Butlers claim Indian descent also. The fact that they are all living by the Monteiths, I suspect that there might be more going on with William Newton than some of us know about.

Interviewer: The Major?

Mr. Cooke: Yes, I think one of his sons could have married someone we don't know about.

But the Perkins who owned Hollywood Farm. Col. Perkins claims to be Pocahontas' descendant.

Interviewer: A direct descendant? Through her first husband? Or maybe a collateral?

Mr. Cooke: Direct descendant. They claim that her husband was Kocuun, Patowmeck warrier. And she was living up here with him when she was kidnaped and he was killed supposedly.

There is a reference to Kocuun having children.

Here is what the Mattaponi say. They say Kocuun was still alive (after Pocahontas was kidnaped) living with children in the village.

And the Perkinses said they descend from him. And some of us too, probably.

Interviewer: That would be hard to prove wouldn't it?

Mr. Cooke: You would never prove it. It would be a very rare occasion if we ever find anything written down about an Indian marriage. Because when we married a white colonist there was either A:-no marriage was performed or B:-you became a Christian and were given a Christian name and no mention of being an Indian was ever made again.

I'll give you an example of that. Giles Brent who lived over on Prince Point married Kittamaquid. She was named Mary and never again was she called Kittamaquid. Her son, Giles Brent Jr. –there was never an Indian name associated with him again.

Parson Ware who lived right next door– this was in the 1600's--got in trouble a lot because he married the Indian girls at 12 and 13 years of age and this was the normal age for marriage. This was old enough to bear children and they would normally be dead by the age of 35.

Interviewer: Or earlier.

Mr. Cooke: He got in trouble for marrying young children. But it never says any more.

Interviewer: But where would you find even that much?

Mr. Cooke: I have researched for so many years—but I think that is in the Stafford County minutes.

I guess I have been researching for 20 to 25 years now.

Interviewer: Since right after high school?

Mr. Cooke: Right, since high school. I guess I had a head start because before I went to high school my evenings were spent at my grandmother's and grandfather's house and we sat under the tree and told stories all evening. So you heard all the old stories about

everything and it would be times like that that we were told we were Indians. That would be when Poppa said we were descended from Pocahontas. He would say we were Pocahontas' cousins. But a lot of the history of White Oak was told at that time–it was being passed from generation to generation.

Interviewer: Oral history.

Mr. Cooke: Unfortunately it wasn't written down.

Interviewer: But you had the background. And you are saying that later in life when you gave that speech you started to get it on paper?

Mr. Cooke: Well, I was standing there on Indian Point at the graveyard, the ossiary, and I was standing there and this old Italian fellow Steve Gambaro told me about a meeting that Robert Green was having to try to reestablish the tribal connections. I told everybody in White Oak that there would be a meeting at the library to try to reestablish the tribe and everybody in White Oak went over there that night. They had about 30 people.

One of my cousins, I guess you could say, had moved to Maryland after the war... and she came over and she walked in to Stafford Courthouse and looked at Tom Moncure, the clerk, and she asked him do you know if there are any Newtons left in Stafford?

(All are laughing)

At which time he laughed.

And this was all during the same week. Robert Green's meeting, me meeting Steve Gambaro, the lady coming in looking for the Newtons.

So we expected 10 or 20 people that night and we got 30 and now we have over 500 people in the tribe who have signed papers saying they are Indian. That is a requirement. You have to have the descent and you have got to also sign papers saying you are an *I*ndian.

Interviewer: You have to prove something don't you?

Mr. Cooke: As a tribal council we can carry it back with genealogy. We pretty much know all the people.

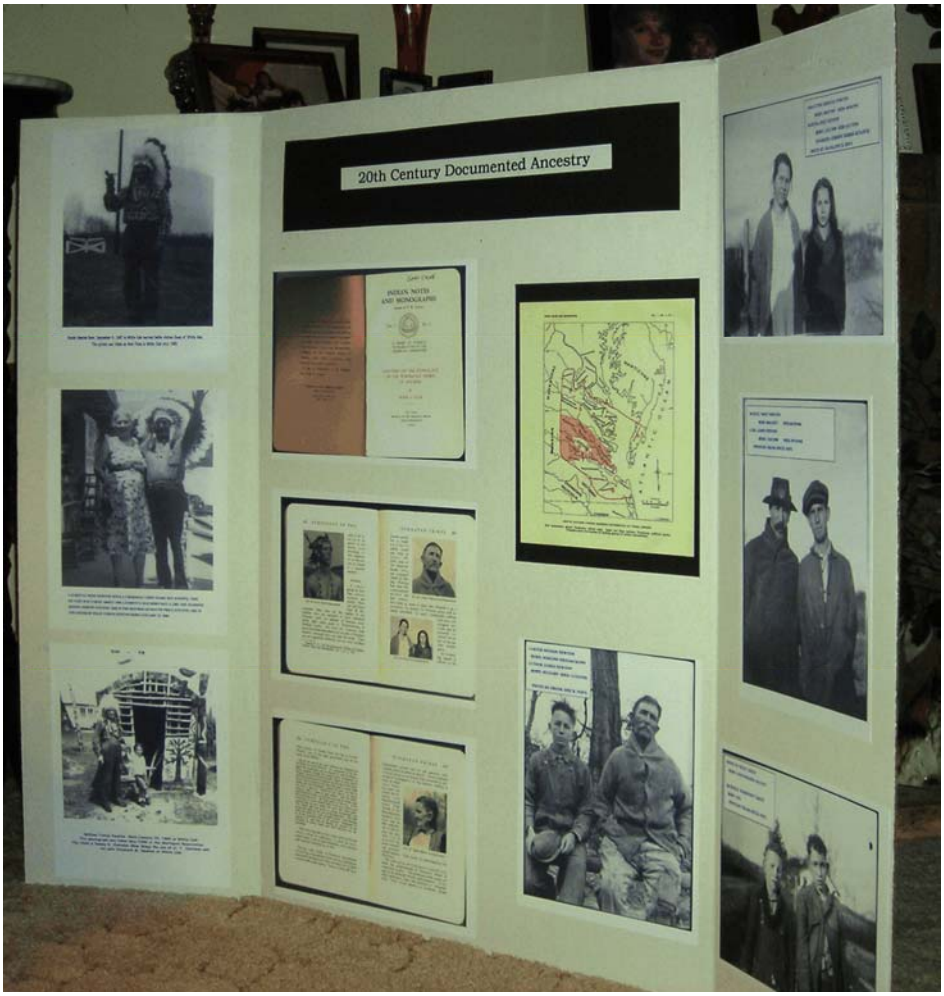
Interviewer: You would know back through generations. How far back can you go? Eight, ten generations?

Mr. Cooke: Well we stop at Wahanganogee. That was about 1660.

Interviewer: Will you tell us about Wahonganogee?

Mr. Cooke: On the northside of Potomac Creek on the Indian Point side there was an Indian chief who we never know the name of. His name is never given. Just that he is a great and powerful chief.

But on the southern side there was a lesser chief and his name as Japazaw. He is the one who lives in Passapatanzy. He's Powhatan's brother. He is always going to visit Powhatan. And a young man by the name of Henry Steelman who was a colonist who came in 1608-1610. He was the third son of Erasmus Steelman. That meant he had nothing to keep him in England so he said. ... It took him about two months to get here and John Smith came through... and said send him with me. I think he's somewhere around 13 or 14 years old at that time and he picked him up and carried him up to Powhatan where he traded him...he said he sold me for a town site.



The Indians didn't have slavery. It seems as though Powhatan has already had a boy–Thomas Savage that he had adopted and little Henry Steelman, he started to fall out of favor with Powhatan and Japazaw is there and he took him to Passapatanzy. Henry Spellman writes a book. He stays with us for two years and writes a

book telling all about tribal customs. The last thing Japazaw gives him as he is leaving is the story of creation. So we have our story of creation.

Japazaws dies–we are going to guess around 1635–and at that time across the river is the Piscataway chief. He has no tie to us. Father Andrew White talks to the Piscataway chief and asks him where do you come from and he says I am going to bring you across the river and show you to the Patowmecks and let you talk to them. We were all one people at one time. We split off somewhere around 1350.

When they carbon dated our village it comes to 1350. He was pretty accurate and that's pretty amazing. So Father White is introduced to Acheewho, the uncle of the boy king. The boy king is Wahanoganoche. I had to tell you all that to bring you back to where I started.

Interviewer: We followed you.

Mr. Cooke: Wahanoganoche has a daughter who married Henry Meese.

Wahanoganoche gives Meese land in the middle of the village so we know he married a daughter. He doesn't sell him land adjoining the village. We know he has married a daughter. No reason Wahanoganoche would ever let an Englishman have land in the middle of the village.

The Meeses married the Ashtons and he gives Grace Ashton, a granddaughter, a cow. But it was pretty amazing that we found all this.

Henry Meese's wife is named Ann. Then there is a second Ann Meese he marries. But the second Ann Meese is Ann Perk. He married her in 1671. I found the will. When she died Parson Waugh tries to take over her land, but it doesn't work that way... maybe he just paid Ann Meese what it was worth.

That very tract of land joins everything from here on down. We have been on this tract of land (right in the same area) since the 1660's. The important thing you have to understand with us is the river—the creek. We all lived around the water. If you wanted to go see somebody you just went across the creek.

Interviewer: This is Indian Point Creek?

Mr. Cooke: Potomac Creek.

Interviewer: But you then became watermen too, right?

Mr. Cooke: We've always been watermen. We were fishers and farmers. The farmers worked on the land and the fishers worked on the water.

Since day one. And we are still fishers and farmers. The eel pots we showed you we made. We've made them forever. The only other people who make eel pots is the Delaware Lenaki which is a tribe to the north.

Interviewer: What is the difference in the terminology between watermen and fishermen?

Mr. Cooke: We just have always called them watermen... right now we are down to 14 watermen. I mean people who actually work on the water to make a living. Things are pretty bad because of pollution. Everybody has a different idea of what to save...but when you take a man's livelihood away for one year you give him a pretty hard road to follow. Yes, I know someone would like to catch a rockfish... but that man who is fishing for a living that's different. That's how he makes his money.

Interviewer: So the different things they did in your generation–they caught crabs and eels

Mr. Cooke: And rockfish and catfish and turtles.

Interviewer: What about shad and herring.

(Mrs. Sullivan says herring were salted down and kept for eating in the winter. Herring were the original salt fish she said)

Interviewer: Everybody did?

Mr. Cooke: We would dip up herring in a net and then put them in barrels with salt. Later the barrels came plastic.

Also we'd catch carp and build log fences – like holding ponds. The fish buyers would come through and they would have live fish to sell them.

Interviewer: I never heard of anything like that. It makes perfect sense. I just never heard of anything like that before.

Mr. Cooke: You see all these ponds around here? They are for catfish. They are called catfish ponds and you put all your catfish in there until you get enough and then when the fish buyer comes you dip them out of the pond and sell them.

(Mrs. Sullivan says there is one right up the road)

Interviewer: You see these signs around for crabs.

(Mrs. Sullivan says everybody has got into it now but it used to be if crabs were being sold you knew the people were White Oakers.)

Mr. Cooke: We also had live boxes. And what that is a frame like a boat but you leave

the holes and the cracks in it and it would have trap door and then you would sink it and it would keep the fish alive. It was like a cage. Then when the buyers came through you would have live fish to sell.

Interviewer: What about eels. Do we get eels here today? People still eat eel?

Mr. Cooke: Yes, they are pretty much bought up by the Japanese.

Interviewer: And Italians. They eat eels.

Mrs. Sullivan: I never ate an eel in my life...Mama cooked them and my daddy would say that when that eel gets cold it is going to start wiggling. I never tasted one in my life.

Interviewer: Did you hunt too?

Mr. Cooke: Yes for food. I hunted every day after school. I hunted for squirrels, rabbits and quail.

Interviewer: No deer?

Mr. Cooke: No deer. I saw one deer in my life when I was growing up.

Interviewer: Isn't that something.

Mr. Cooke: But here's what happened to the deer. In 1862 we were occupied by the Yankee troops and they cut down every tree and killed every animal. Nothing here but squirrels and rabbits that came back eventually.

Interviewer: Of course they were using the trees for roads.

Mr. Cooke: They tell me in 1935 someone saw deer tracks down at the creek and all of White Oak went down and looked at the tracks. And they had to figure out what it was. What is this animal?

Interviewer: What about birds like geese?

Mr. Cooke: Oh sure. Geese. Sure–anything that moved we could hunt.

Interviewer: You hunted with a gun?

Mr. Cooke: A 22 if I was hunting.

Interviewer: Do you know how to clean them?

Mr. Cooke: Oh sure. It's a real art...

Interviewer: Did you learn that from your grandfather–Big Daddy?

Mr. Cooke: I used to go hunting with him but he wasn't a real good shot.

Mrs. Sullivan: Daddy had poor eyesight.

Mr. Cooke: My uncle down the road. Harry Green he was an excellent hunter. He was married to Mama's sister. He was an excellent hunter and I went in the woods all the time

with him. He had excellent eyesight and he could look up the tree and see anything that was moving up there. He was a good tracker and he could track a rabbit right to its bed. There were lots of Harry Greens here at one time but this one was an excellent hunter. He was a grumpy old man but he was a nice man... I guess that's why I spent so much time in the woods and how I knew the woods so well.

My grandfather also taught me to make whistles. Take a popular tree and split the bark off the poplar tree and make a whistle out of it.

Mr. Cooke: I have to write that down so the next generation will know how to do it. (He has taught a niece.)

Interviewer: What about getting your first gun? Was that a big deal?

Mr. Cooke: I got a BB gun first and I had to prove I knew how to use it before I got another gun. My cousin would take me over there and teach me how to shoot a 22 and my uncle taught me how to shoot a shotgun. That was pretty funny, he knew how that was going to kick.

...it was real nice the way he would take me. He taught me a lot.

Interviewer: Do you suspect most of what he taught you was things he had learned as he grew up.

Mr. Cooke: Everybody at White Oak hunted. The difference was we were taught not to fear guns. Just don't point the gun at anything you don't intend to shoot. Gun safety was always an important thing down here. Nobody ever shot anybody by accident. I mean there were some accidental shootings but they were real accidents.

We were taught enough that we were to know our targets. When hunting you actually saw it or you didn't shoot it.

...

I guess you are taught that thing we shoot was alive. It's very personal–you are taking a life and spirit away. The spirit is very important.

Interviewer: Do you still do some hunting today. Or is there no place to hunt anymore?

Mr. Cooke: Oh I can hunt...but I would just as soon walk up and touch things and blend in with them as hunt anymore. I don't have to hunt any more for food. I would rather count coo. Here's an example.

I was in the woods one day and there was a beaver. I said there's a beaver and I could walk up and touch him but he is not going to be a bit happy. So I cleared my throat and he

went off.

Interviewer: You said a word "coo". Counting coo? What does that mean?

Mr. Cooke: Why the white man and the Indian couldn't understand each other: the Indian warrior would go into battle with only a stick and he would walk up and touch the other Indian warrior on the shoulder because that it an extreme act of bravery and that's called counting coo.

If the other brave killed him then he is a coward because he has approached him with no weapon.

The Indians would never kill each other when they walked up with sticks, so the Indian couldn't understand the white man shooting him when he touched him with a stick. There was no logic there.

You are not hurting them. You are just touching them.

And that's what I was doing with the beaver. But I decided he didn't feel the same way about it.

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Interviewer: You mentioned hearing Indian stories. Could you tell some of them?

Mr. Cooke: Well one conversation led to another. But I will give you one we were told. One of them was from my grandmother's grandfather.

Interviewer: Your grandmother Birdie?

Mr. Cooke: It was Virginia Stevens whose father was Horace Potts. He married Susan Shelkett...

My great great grandmother was born on Seelwood Farm in the middle of what's now Crows Nest. It was 1660 acres right in the middle of the peninsula. It had Potomac Creek on one side and Accakink on the other side. That's where she was born.

Then in about 1835 they moved from there and moved over to the George Newton tract where she lived later on in life: The 500 acres I was raised on. Okay. Horace, her daddy, everybody said he cut up a black man and had to run away and was never heard of again. That's a long story and I won't bore you with that. It gets very colorful. But what finally happened – I found out in the paper–the Crow's Nest farm was taken over by the----- . The Tollsons were involved in the suit because there were underage kids living on Crow's Nest.

Horace Potts got to drinking and he went to Falmouth Town—not Fredericksburg but

Falmouth Town. He cut up the sheriff–I think it was one of the Tollsons he cut up– but anyway, they said he was crazy and they locked him up. The sheriff lived, but they put Horace Potts in jail and said he was crazy. Well the Falmouth town council met and they said if he cut up the sheriff he had to be crazy so they committed him to Williamsburg (Eastern State mental hospital) where he died

That's why we (the Newtons) were living over here alone at that point in time.

But the story that was told to us was that he (Horace Potts) cut up a black man and he had to run.

And the sheriff was after him and he had to run away. And it was covered up and never came to light.

Then Caroline King died ...and they dug up the story again. Some of the Potts were listed as her heirs and my grandfather got some money out of it.

Some of the stories that I research I find are basically true but are one, two, three or even five generations off and they are mixed up. I mean they are true but mixed up a lot.

My grandmother – great, great grandmother–went to White Oak Primitive Church and she went there for several years until she disagreed with the minister. She was pretty outspoken. And I guess she made someone mad.

She was very strict in her views. She was married to William Newton at the time and she and William B. Newton gave land for a new church and built the Tabernacle Methodist Church. There were no Methodists here at the time.

The Silvers –the ones who came down here and live on Silver Ridge– they were tied to her too.

They weren't kin. They were just friends. (Silver graves are located in the Tabernacle cemetery.)

Then eventually after William B. Newton died she (Virginia Potts) married a Stevens. This was probably 1880 and they moved over and built New Hope Church and it was a Methodist Church too.

Interviewer: But I thought there were no Methodists here.

(Mrs. Sullivan says that Mr. Ashton Stevens was a Methodist and that is one reason for locating the New Hope Methodist Church and for it to be Methodist. Tabernacle was closed, Mr. Cooke and Mrs. Sullivan explain.)

Mr. Cooke: Tabernacle had a Methodist preacher. Marcellus Robinson and the

Robinsons lived right here on this property. He was called the marrying preacher.
...

The Indians were already here even in 1837. But then we actually found something we could buy and there were big acreage too.
But once the Newton Tract was bought it was continually made into smaller and smaller tracts. Now the county has fixed it so we can't do that anymore. We can't cut the land up anymore.
Interviewer: You mean you have to have a certain number of acres on which to build?
Mr. Cooke: Right. A subdivided tract has to be of a certain size and has to have land for a septic tank. Or a certified perk site. You see, before we built our own houses.
I can't remember anyone who didn't build his own house.
If you wanted something you built your own house. If you wanted something fixed you fixed it. We were all very sufficient.
Mrs. Sullivan: All of us built our own houses. This house was built on a half acre. Garnett built this. He had been in the navy and gone back to the Sylvania Plant and then to the typewriter repair business and he built his own house. He never had any training. He'd worked for his father-- a little bit. Someone else helped lay the cinder block.
That's the way we did around here. We built our own.
Mr. Cooke: We built our own boats. I used to sit with my uncle Harry and he would just sit there and make crab pots. He'd make eel pots or crab pots.
Mrs. Sullivan: They didn't use crab pots at first —they would use lines, thread it out and bring it back. Bait it with eels.
Interviewer: Did you ever hunt with a bow and arrow?
Mr. Cooke: I started hunting with a bow and arrow.
We made our own bows and I would go in the woods and cut a tree and make a bow. We never really hunted much because it is kind hard to hit a squirrel with an arrow. It's really, really hart.
Mrs. Sullivan: When you belonged to the hunt club didn't you hunt with a bow and arrow?
Mr. Cooke: Yes. When I hunt I hunt with a bow and arrow. I like hunting with a bow and arrow and you are right there with the animal and you can apologize immediately to the

animal. I don't like to kill things. And if you are hunting with a bow and arrow you are close enough to be personal with an animal.

...

I also use to make a gravel shooter. You use a dogwood tree. Dogwood trees have opposite limbs. And you take forks of the tree and bend them up and let them grow that way for awhile and then cut the forks and take rubber innertube strips, later rubber bands and tie them on top and connect them and use that to shoot gravels.

And that's a gravel shooter.

Interviewer: What about turkey shoots.

I always wanted to go to one.

Mr. Cooke: Usually that's with a shotgun and one of them was at Ernest Newton's store up here. There could be three or four of them in one night and we'd go up there and they would put a target out at thirty yards and you'd shoot it with a shotgun. And whoever got closest to the cross got the prize— bacon or whatever it was.

Interviewer: Oh you didn't shoot the turkey? You won it.

(All are laughing.)

Mr. Cooke: Sometimes it would be with a .22 rifle.

That takes more skill than a shotgun

Interviewer: Those were really popular when we first moved here.

Mr. Cooke: Every week we'd have something. And every week I'd go I'd win something.

Interviewer: I want to go back to the effort to try to the tribe recognized. I'm going way off what we were talking about, but where are you in this? Are you waiting for the research?

Mr. Cooke: We can't write the paper in a format that the State of Virginia will accept. William and Mary are having their students interview us to prepare the material that we need. We have to meet a certain set of criteria to qualify. I think the first time we did it we had to meet seven criteria and we met all but three. One of the three was to show community.

Interviewer: It seems to me that you can do that.

Mr. Cooke: We couldn't then because we didn't know what they were asking for.

We are trying to get ourselves back to be considered under the old criteria, because now

the criteria are such that the already approved tribes can't meet the criteria. ...
They are going for federal recognition. None of them can meet these criteria because there are no records.
It's just like this: somebody asked me about how to spell some Indian words and I said there is no wrong spelling because we didn't spell at all. We had no written records.
Interviewer: What you started this effort back in 1995, did you all then start having an organization.
Mr. Cooke: Our council meets at White Oak School (the Civil War Museum) once a quarter and at that time we review all of our upcoming events, anything that we might be going to do, and also all applications for membership. When we started this instead of pushing membership, we got applications into the hands of the family members we knew and let them push them down through the family to the younger generations. It surprised me that now we have about 500 members of the tribe.
Interviewer: What does the council do?
Mr. Cooke Cooke: We made our own constitution. That was one of the things we were missing. We have an executive branch, a judicial branch and a tribal council. The tribal council is the legislative branch. And this is sort of what Ben Franklin stole from the Iroquois anyway.
The executive branch includes the chief and the lesser chief. At first we called him the vice chief but we changed that to lesser chief in honor of Japazaw. He wasn't a vice chief he was a lesser chief.
Interviewer: And you are one of these?
Mr. Cooke: Yes. I am a lesser chief and he is in charge of the tribal council. The chief has no vote on the council. Then there are four members at large which come from all the different families. We try to keep our representation spread out so that everybody has got somebody he or she can talk to. Our whole thing is we know that 90 per cent of the people won't come to any meetings but they all want to know so if you have somebody in your family you won't think twice about talking to them. If you have a real concern you can let them know. But since the council has been in being we have had Discovery Days (both 2006 and 2007)...
We had two months to put that together. We are a pretty amazing people the way we can put things together.

You see we don't have regalia. We wear these clothes.
But we had to made a 16th century village and we all got together and did it. All of us bought hides and in two weeks time we had the regalia made and the fellow from the Smithsonian came down and looked at it and said who did you get to make your regalia it is so authentic.
Just think of how anything would have looked and do it. Our people have always been our people. The Indian people were always Indians They were not savages who ran in the woods and scalped each other and did war cries. They were fishers and farmers. Whatever they had they used. When we prepared for Discovery Days I said whatever you do do it without metal.
....
Interviewer: What kinds of meetings do you have. You said the tribal council meets four times a year.
Mr. Cooke: We have a yearly meeting at the White Oak Fire Department.
And it's on the first Sunday of October of every year and we have done that from the late 90s.
Originally we had 100's of people and now it has slowed down. A lot of the original elders have died.
When we put information in with the state council on Indians I told them that the reason we are doing this now is that in 10 years there will be no Patowmecks if we don't do it. We will have lost our identity. Land will be so expensive we can't afford to buy. The real shame is that we convinced the real one we needed to do this and she died...
Interviewer: Virginia mentioned that there was a meeting where they make baskets...
Mrs. Sullivan: We get together and quilted and now we're getting together and making baskets.
This is the first year we haven't made quilts for five or six years....we raffle them off.
Mr. Cooke: See we don't charge for anything so we raise money. We have no dues. And we need postage money and to make donations to the firehouse for letting us use the firehouse. And so what we do is make quilts or baskets and raffle them off. And take that money and pay the expenses of the tribe. That was one of the things when we put the tribe together, we didn't want the elders having to come up with money for being Indian. It is not a club. It is a heritage.

Mrs. Sullivan: And we have a good time. We have a pot luck and we have food galore. We have dancing. Mr. Cooke plays musical instruments and there are a whole lot who play music.

Mr. Cooke: I play guitar, banjo, dobrow... just bought a string bass. It's not real hard. You could play it. Indian flute.

I have played a dulcimer.

Interviewer: And you do have a full time job.

Mr. Cooke: Oh yes, I am a land surveyor. I do surveys, environmental permits and stuff like that.

Interviewer: You did tell us that. Did you survey land here in Stafford County?

Mr. Cooke: Yes, I worked here for 13 years. Had my own business for 13 years. I worked for Wayne Farmer for 13 years. I learned from Wayne Farmer. That was 26 years in Stafford before I went with can't get name here.

Mrs. Sullivan: Do you know how old he was when he said he was going to be a land surveyor?

Three. We were building this house and we got this follow to survey the property and we looked and there was Gary following the surveyor.

His daddy said, "don't be getting in the way." And Gary said, "I'm not. I'm going to be a land surveyor like George Washington."

Mr. Cooke: The gentleman's name was Mr. John Russell and he was a fine surveyor. He didn't have high tech surveying like we do, but when he set a corner, you could find his corner which is the whole secret of surveying anyway.

He just recently died. I got to talk to him in the nursing home. My wife met him and she said "Mr. Russell, my husband speaks highly of you." And he said, "That was that little boy who followed me around...wouldn't leave me alone." He was a fine surveyor.

Interviewer: Then you were surveying when this county was growing?

Mr. Cooke: Yes. I was surveying when nobody wanted to buy anything in Stafford County. In the 70's.

I went to Virginia Tech for a year and a quarter. I found out that land surveying is not engineering and I was taking engineering down there and the courses I was taking ---- would not qualify me for a surveyor's license. I came back up here and went to work for Mr. Farmer and followed him through the woods for 13 years and learned a whole lot

from him. My Indian skills–tracking—I could walk in the woods and look at the wood line and I see this much difference in the height of the trees and I say here's where the property line went through. It's something you learn to do.
... I still go in the field. I can't sign a survey that I haven't been to the land and looked at it... if I am actually doing a boundary survey I am going to be there and look at it before I sign.
I actually look for the cornerstone... I've been doing that since 1972. It's been a good life. I don't think I would have ever wanted to do anything different. I actually learned to measure things with steel tapes and plumb bobs–the whole way instead of the lights and mirrors it is now.
Interviewer: The lasers?
Mr. Cooke: It might be surprising but it all checks fairly accurately if you go back and resurvey them.
Interviewer: You mean the ones you did yourself the old way?
Mr. Cooke: Yes. Mr. Russell was a fine man. My wife told him, "My husband says one thing about Mr. Russell is he sets his corners. You can't say anything better about a surveyor–he sets his corners."
...
Mr. Russell made his money surveying the Panana Canal.
Interviewer: What about your career today. Where are you?
Mr. Cooke: I'm in Dale City. Right on the edge of the madness.
I met this other surveyor in the back of the Giant Food. We call it the jobs section. He said I need to hire somebody and I said hire me. I was joking, but he didn't quit and I got all my people hired and eventually we all went up there to work.
Interviewer: What's the name of the company?
Mr. Cooke: Design Building Concepts. It's engineering and surveying.
Mrs. Sullivan: He was president of Virginia Association of Land Surveyors.
Mr. Cooke: I decided I would go through all the levels of the land surveyors' associations and I ended up as president of the Virginia Association of Land Surveyors.
Interviewer: What about your wife? Is she a nurse? Is she an Indian?
Mr. Cooke: Yes she's a nurse and she actually is an Indian, but she claims the Irish more than the Indian.

(Gary and Carol met on a blind date and dated about six months before he proposed. After their marriage, they worked together in his land surveying business for several years before Gary realized he would need to take a partner specializing in engineering. At that point Carol went to Germanna Community College and got her associate's degree and then to VCU where she got her nursing degree. Today she works for Health Link, Medicorps Health Corps. They have three children, Valerie Michelle Cooke Hobbs Harte, 34, Melinda Joy Cooke Willis, 27, and Andrew Stuart Cooke, 26. Grandchildren are: Krystina Hobbs Harte, Brett Harte, and Melinda's children, Katie and Ben Willis.)

Interviewer: To change the subject a little do you find you are doing more events or more research? I think the tribe is trying to do more events.

Mr. Cooke: Well you have got to understand that one thing that makes our culture different.

When we have an event we all know what we are supposed to do and we just trust each other to do it. We make a plan. We just sit and talk to each other and then we show up and we do it.

And we don't get real upset if something doesn't go quite the way we planned it. We figure however it turned out is how it was supposed to turn out. If you are there you will meet the people you were supposed to meet. It's amazing. The people at these events all end up looking pretty much the same. We will make our own regalia. Like the man from the Smithsonian said, "Where do you get regalia makers like that?"

I guess I have been working a lot of time recently on research and getting things in order.

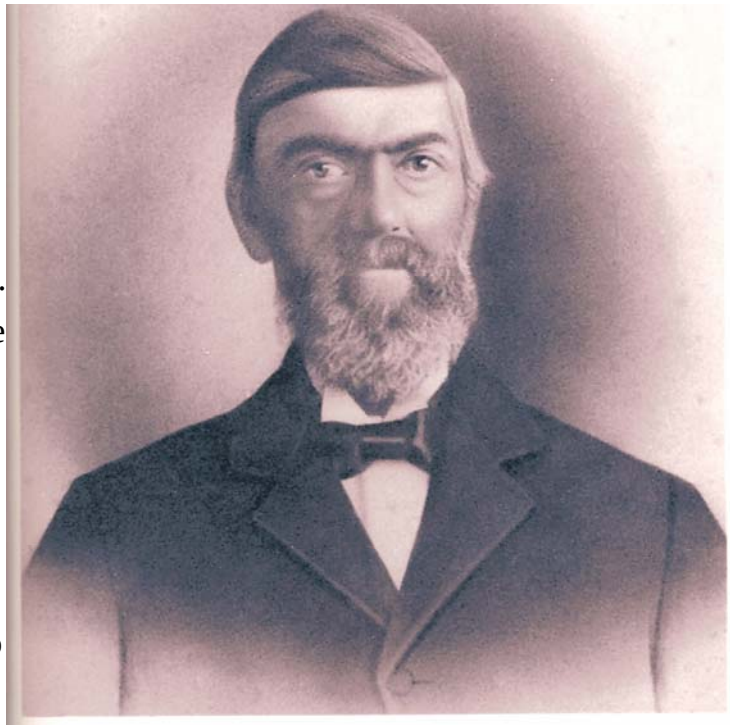
Mr. Cooke's story of Paul's Hill.

Paul and Silas were brothers. They were Virginia Stevens' children. (Virginia was born Virginia Potts, daughter of Horace Potts). They were coming home from school and there was an old ex-slave out in the field and he told them to come and help him hoe them butterbeans.

Silas ran. Paul give him some mouth.
He said stay here boy, I'm going to get my shotgun. He went to his cabin and he got a shot gun and he shot Paul. Paul fell on the rocks and blood was all over the rocks and the rocks ended up in the foundation stones of my grandmother's house.
Later on Silas moved away. (Silas' descendant is the woman who came in and asked the county clerk if there were any Newtons still around.) We had always wondered what happened to Silas and his descendants.
I did the research because I wasn't happy with the story. What happened was this:
The paper called him a wraith who was named Flinch. He was 13 or 14 years old. They said that he cussed too much for the Newton boys and they run him off. The wraith came back and waited around and shot Paul and from that point on it was always called Paul's Hill. That's where he fell.
The wraith–Mr. Flinch-- ran away. He ran away through the woods and went to Sims Peyton's house (that's where the Chapmans used to live over in Locust Grove) and he hid over there. There's speculation as to who he really was. He was later captured and went on trial but we don't know what happened to him.
Interviewer: He was black?
Mr. Cooke: Probably. But we don't know much more because the newspaper just dropped the story.
Interviewer: Paul Hill was such an interesting story. Are there other street names that are interesting?
Mr. Cooke: Well there is Newton Road. The road ran through the Newton tract. In 1837 when the Newtons moved in, the road ran down the middle of the tract and then they started to build on both sides of it.
Then this road out here, Belle Plains, was actually Stage Road. In the other old deeds it ran from the steamboat landing which is down at Potomac Creek to Fredericksburg. The stage ran on it.
Then Newton Road was also called the Stage Road because the stage ran on it during the Civil Road. Later it was rebuilt.
Interviewer: Was it Belle Plains Road where they brought out the wounded during the Civil War?
Mr. Cooke: It was called Stage Road then and supposedly they brought John Wilkes Booth down this road and loaded him on a boat and took him back to Washington. That's "supposedly."

Interviewer: That's an interesting piece of oral history. Do you know others?

Mr. Cooke: Well there was this black lady named Julie McKinney living up the road. And she did voodoo ways. She looked at someone and said you are going to bust open and die and they did. People thought she could do hexes and wouldn't cross the line in the road.



Albion Newton (son of Gustavus B. Newton and Eleanor Monteith) married Silvester Nae Sullivan (daughter of Jonas F. Sullivan and Octavia Ellen Francis Shelton) Parents of Birdie and Broadie Newton and others.

I was scared to go up there as a kid. *The tape has run out and the interviewers thank Mr. Cooke and Mrs. Sullivan and leave.*

Earlier the interviewers had asked Mr. Cooke about Indian words still in use today in White Oak. They are "heish" which means open the window or door if it is closed or close the window or door if it is open. A second word is scarum which means rotten.

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Today is November 8, 2007. I am Suzanne Willis interviewing Gary Cooke to clarify earlier information and also to learn about a specialized field he has studied for years.

Interviewer: Can you help us clarify your earlier reference to Col. Perkins, Hollywood Farm, and Pocahontas.

Mr. Cooke: Okay. The Col. Thomas Perkins farm, the Hollywood Farm, lies on the road that runs from Routes 3 to 218. It falls on what is now called Muddy Creek, back then it was even called Muddy Creek. It is the original location of the first church in Stafford County. It was named Potomac Church. The Potomac Church was also called Muddy Creek Church. When you find its listings, you will find that it will be called Muddy Creek Church, but it was actually the old Potomac Church. To the right of this first church parcel is where the Monteiths' lived who are of Indian descent. Also Mr. Perkins calls himself a descendant of Pocahontas and he also married into the Monteiths. This previous information can be found in the 1937 WPA Reports (Work Progress Administration). The old Muddy Creek Church or the old Potomac Church only stayed there for a couple of years and it burned down. It was reestablished further on into the county on Parson Waugh's land, next to Brooke Road where the new Potomac Church begins. The new church was burnt down all the way back to the Civil War. Okay. The new Potomac Church was a sister church to Aquia Church. This Colonel Perkins lived on Muddy Creek. If you followed Muddy Creek all the way to where it intersects Rt. 218, it was the dividing line between the Rappahannock and the Potomac watersheds. The stream on the other side that leads toward Potomac Creek is called Whipsawason Branch and that was on Henry Meese's land and he married a chief's daughter.

Interviewer: The Hollywood Farm is located where exactly again?

Mr. Cooke: The Hollywood Farm is Perkins's and it is located at the intersection of Route 3 and Muddy Creek on the Stafford side and it is now called Hollywood Farm Road.

Interviewer: There is no Hollywood place anymore?

Mr. Cooke: It is Hollywood Farm subdivision. Ironically, when you passed Muddy Creek and you went over into the Whipsawason Branch, the one that goes up that gut becomes Japazaws subdivision.

Interviewer: We did mention that earlier**.** We had another area that we needed to straighten out. Henry Meese land near Glebe land – can you explain that me?

Mr. Cooke: Henry Meese's land was called Overwharton from Overwharton Parish because he was from Overwharton Parish in England… Parson Waugh took it over and became a minister and he called it Overwharton Parish and that is how the whole place up here is called Overwharton. The road right down at the intersection of King George/Stafford County line; well there is a road that goes back into the piece of it that had been Henry Meese's to the north 218 and it is called the Glebe Road because it was part of the church property or land that the parish would have used.

Interviewer: That is clear now. Thank you.

Mr. Cooke: It's at Marlborough Point and that is Indian Point. They are the same**.**

Interviewer: Where does Indian Creek come in?

Mr. Cooke: At the time John Smith came up, we were living on the north side of the creek which was known as Potomac property or Potomac Village. Smith said he was at the intersection of Potomac Creek and Aquia Creek. It is now called Indian Point on all the old maps. We were also living on the south side of the creek, Potomac Creek, where it intersects the river which is now around the Waugh Point area that was called Matchapongo.

Interviewer: You will have to spell that.

Mr. Cooke: Matchapongo or something like that. When Henry Spellman comes to Potomac Creek… Samuel Argall comes to pick up Henry Spellman, he looks at John Smith's location and he said "Mattapongo". But Mattapongo was on the south side of the Potomac Creek and it is proven with some of the deeds that I have researched that the Foster tract that Mr. Gerrard Fowlkes owned. He owned the Foster tract which adjoined Mattapongo which means Henry Spellman was living with Japazaws who he is supposed to be with on the south side of the creek and not the northside of the creek. Passapatanzy which is the third village site is actually located behind the Passapatanzy store on a branch of Lamb's Creek that flows into the Rappahannock. The Potomacs always had two doors into the village site, just like a rabbit or a groundhog would have. They would never have just one door; you always had two doors….

Interviewer: Another area we want to recheck is this Crow's Nest Farm. Can you clarify that for us?

Mr. Cooke: Crow's Nest farm property was – well you have Crow's Nest Point of about 1600 acres roughly, and the middle third which was called Sellwood. Sellwood came from the Potomac Creek side all the way over the ridge and ended over into Accokeek Creek. That is what the boundaries would be to that. That was the middle third of it. To the left was Colonel

Brown's property and that was about another 1600 acres, so the peninsula was roughly 3,600 acres or something along that line. The middle third was owned by our great, great grandmother who was living when John Shelkett the elder died. John Shelkett and his father William put the whole Sellwood estate in protection because of the under age children of those Shelkett families. They put a gentleman by the name of Endeavor, who was an attorney, in charge of the children; they put Mr. Tolson in– investing and protecting the land. There were many slaves on the Crow's Nest Farm. The slaves would run away and then they would have to go get the slaves and bring them back. Well, every time they would get the slaves and bring them back they would charge. He kept a record of how much he had to run to King George and get them. By the time Crow's Nest ends up being resolved, Nancy Shelkett, who is living over on the 235 acres, takes them to court and there is a big suit against them. All of the other people had moved out of the area, except for the ones up in Hartwood. There is nothing left of the farm. They pretty much squandered it away when they did the tallies. I have some of that, those tallies. When they do the tallies, there is hundred's of dollars worth of expense, running against the estate because they had to go get the slaves and bring them back. There is nobody to watch the land; all the land has gone fallow. That is how it left the family.

Gary Cooke on Native Plants

Interviewer: One other item that we just heard about, with all your talents, which we did not get on the last tape, was the fact that you know a lot about the herbs and plants in this area. How did you get interested?

Mr. Cooke: How I came to know a lot of the plants in the area is my grandfather always carried us in the woods and my uncle was always in the woods, so you had to know and learn the plants by their common names. A common name in plants encompasses about five or six different species, yet everybody calls a plant by a different common name. They call it something else, so I learned the proper names or the scientific names – genus, species and all of that. I would like to be able to give it the right name.

I guess the best way to talk about the plants is to put it in more perspective – in modern society we seem to forget that we are just a thread in the blanket.

We think that as human beings, we two- legged people, that walk the earth; we don't need nature. Because of our computers and our knowledge, we have raised ourselves above nature and the earth. We kind of just walk around and control everything. In our society, we are just a thread in the blanket; we are just a part of life. In real life if you affect anything, you also affect yourself. In other words, you pick up a blade of grass; you have affected yourself

because maybe a deer would have walked out and eaten that blade of grass, where now he goes over and eats those apples, you were growing for your food. Everything has to be in proper perspective. In an Indian society, the human people, we are called two-legged and the animals are called people too and the plants are called people. You call everything little people. Everything is alive; every rock is a living being, but especially the plant people.

We tend to just think we can just go in –for instance when we clear a lot, we just pile the trees up, where we save them until we grind them up and turn them into mulch with a tree saver, if they are lucky or burn them, whatever you do with it. In the Indian society that is not what you should do. Plants are people too. If you really want to know the plants, you have to sit and introduce yourself and then the plant will sit there while you study it or be prayful to it; it will yield up its secrets. In the Indian society they say, no one can know anything about anything; you just have to talk to it and pay proper respect. In paying respect, it will reveal its secrets. So it is with plant people. To really enjoy the medicine of the plant people, you have to pay proper respect to the plant. When you first pick a plant, you always give it a prayer. If you have tobacco you put some tobacco on the ground as an offering to the plant before you pick it.

I guess probably I know thousands of plants. Probably if you pull up most of them, I can usually tell you which genus and many times I can do the species, if it is one of the plants that I see a lot. That was taught to me by my grandmother, my grandfather and my uncles and everybody else that went into the woods with me, because each one knew something different, each one called a plant something different – like the dogwood tree which is *Cornus florida* is what it is. My grandmother told me that you could tell because you can tell dogwood by its bark. My attempt at humor. (Laughing)

Interviewer: I understand.

Mr. Cooke: But anyway, one of the gifts of the dogwood tree would be after you have eaten and you have no toothbrush, if you break the limb, because of the way dogwood breaks, it is very fibrous and you can use it for a toothbrush.

Interviewer: That's great.

Mr. Cooke: It also has antiseptic qualities. Now another plant would be the sassafras. It is *Sassafras albidum* and it is very aromatic. If you would break the branch, this smell is wonderful and it makes sassafras tea.

Interviewer: Oh, yes.

Mrs. Sullivan: (Mr. Cooke's mother) Chew it. That is also a good chew like chewing gum. We did not have chewing gum.

Mr. Cooke: You break a little piece off the limb and chew it.

Interviewer: Is it a tree or a bush?

Mr. Cooke: It can be both. It has two types of leaves – one like a little mitten and then some

oblong. What you would do, like this one here, you would pull the bark off and scrape between the bark and that would be what you would make your tea out of. If you want stronger tea, you would use the roots. But you always must be careful when you take the plant's root to not pull the whole plant out. Our medicine wheel which is up by Aquia Point, I think they call it Aquia Landing Park now, has big huge sassafras trees growing and they are probably 60 feet high.

Interviewer: Wow.

Mr. Cooke: And they are probably 18 to 20 inches in diameter. The trick to living with plants is that you don't want the plant to die because you might want to use it again. Look at the cattail. It can be used in all weather. In the early spring you can eat the fresh *Typha latifolia* cattail stalk and it tastes like asparagus.

Interviewer: The stalk? Not that brown part…

Mr. Cooke: When that gets all the way up, it is called a punk.

Interviewer: It does look like a punk.

Mr. Cooke: The punk on top of it which is the brown part, well before it turns brown it has pollen on it. The pollen is very sweet and you can put that on pancakes. The punk itself becomes fluffy with those seeds and you can put it between the layers of your coat for filler, like down. Or you can take them to start fire with when you're in the woods and you need a fire. Then you sit there and look at it and then you can take that head and soak it in tallow, like a candle, animal fat, or even pine sap which gives off that aromatic smell for insect control. They make nice torches. You can reach down in there and pull it up by the root itself which has more fiber or starches than the potato. How the colonist lived when they got here was watching the Potomacs go out and eat those cattail roots. You always can see that little punk up above the water saying, here I am come and use one of my roots. The roots themselves have those little corms on them, little small pieces that look like corn and you can take those off and it is a good nibble. You can dry them and turn them into flour – cattail flour.

Interviewer: That is a marvelous plant to have.

Mr. Cooke: I love cattails. If you are eating the plant you can actually eat some of the corms and shove the root back in the mud because it is aquatic and just keeps on growing. That way you do not damage the plant. Try not to harvest the whole plant because you want it to grow back next year. In case you need a trial size, nibble again.

Another thing I used was these hickory nuts –*Carya tomentosa* (Shows them.)

Mrs. Sullivan: Have you ever eaten one?

Interviewer: I don't think so. They aren't the ones you get at Christmas, are they?

Mr. Cooke: They are mokkernuts. I guess I had bags of those. The squirrels eat them all the time. They are so hard that you can't just break them like peanuts or something. Usually I take

a vice and turn them slowly in the vice until they pop and pick them out with a nail. They are real sweet tasting and are a real nice treat.

Interviewer: They are harvested in the fall, obviously.

Mr. Cooke: They are in the fall and I expect people with nut allergies will not particularly like hickory nuts.

Interviewer: Do we have a lot of hickory nuts in this area?

Mr. Cooke: Yes. They are on the trees right now that have the real yellow leaves; they have compound leaves but they are real bright yellow. We have many different kinds of hickory but the two biggest ones we use are the ones right there – the mokkernut and the pignut. The reason it is called pignut is even though it is easier to get the meat out than the mokkernut, but they taste bad. So, some say, they are only fit to be eaten by pigs- that is why they are called pig nuts. (Laughing)

Interviewer: You probably have acorns and black walnuts here as well.

Mr. Cooke: We would take black walnuts-- we would use those for dye because the actual walnuts make a real good stain. Once we got the husk off of them, we would crack the walnuts. That's *Juglans nigra* – the black walnut.

Interviewer: They are the ones that are yellow-greenish right now and quite big. It is hard to get the outer shell off, I understand.

Mr. Cooke: It depends on whether you want your hands stained a lot. The way a lot of people do it is put it in the driveway and drive the car over it. Naturally, the husk would fall off or eventually stain the earth. Then you take them out to crack them.

Mrs. Sullivan: They make a delicious cake.

Mr. Cooke: We were always eating hickory nuts. They taste good and they were easy to find. We ate acorns, but to eat them you need - all right you have your two main species of acorns. There would be white oak acorns and red oak acorns. The red oaks, *Quercus ruba,* you can always tell because they have a point on the very tip of their leaves. The white oaks, called *Quercus alba* have rounded leaves. We made baskets out of it; we made eel pots and we split it off. Of course we heated the house with them. Acorns – if you soak them in water, running water and bleach out the tannic acid, then you can make coffee out of them. Very good coffee. Or you can make flour – grind them up and make flour

Interviewer: That would be a lot of work though.

Mr. Cooke: All of this stuff is a lot of work, but if you don't have it… The stuff you grow in the yard – like plantains.

Interviewer: You have those here?

Mr. Cooke: You are thinking about one of those banana things. No this little thing grows in your yard as a, quote unquote, weed. It is a *Plantago major*. You have *Plantago lancelota* which is English plantains. We call those flycatchers because they grow out in your yard and it has a little flat slender leaf and it sends up a stalk with a little head that droops over and they even grow in a manicured yard. The other was *Plantain major* which is what they called white man's foot; the Indians called it white man's foot, because it was brought over by the English. Every time they found a yard that had one of his shoes in it, that was shaped like this plantain that is what they called it. Many of the Indian people won't use it because they said it was cursed because it was brought over from England, but anybody who really likes plants knows that the plant choose to come over here and you should use it. It can be eaten early in life, when it has young leaves on it - makes a good salad, just like dandelions. You can also make a salve out of it. If you take it and boil it down and mix it with animal fat of some kind, lard if you got it or whatever, you would use that to put on your wounds.

Mrs. Sullivan: How about poison oak?

Mr. Cooke: Poison oak? I would usually use jewel weed which is *Impatiens capensis*. It is a member of the impatiens family which everybody grows in the house now.

Interviewer: I know those.

Mr. Cooke: Those are in the same family. It is full of juice. For instance if you went into the woods, it grows in the same biological locations or address; it just means its position in the landscape, it grows in swampy areas next to the plant called *Utica diocia* or stinging nettle.

Interviewer: I have heard of stinging nettle.

Mr. Cooke: Stinging nettle, when you get it on you, it burns like stinging nettle. You take the impatiens or the jewel weed plant and crush it open; it will immediately put the burn out. We believe that all things that were negative that the creator created; he also created the answer right there beside it. It is also good for poison ivy. Once we took the canoe out up on medicine hill. A lot of Indians got poison ivy - all over their body but they wiped their hands on jewel weed and nobody got it.

Interviewer: I would like to know that jewel weed because I get poison ivy every spring and it gets worse every time.

Mrs. Sullivan: I did too when I was young. She (her mother) did not call it jewel weed. She called it *Beasely* and boiled it and kept it in a jar. If I looked at poison of any kind I got it.

Interviewer: What does it look like? It is a tall or short weed?

Mr. Cooke: Depending – the big one is probably about waist high.

Interviewer: Will I see it around my poison oak or ivy?

Mr. Cooke: Not necessarily. You'd probably have to walk in the woods quite a ways It grows in the marshes, grows in wet places. Most of your good herbs grow in wet places. The bonesets – that is another one.

Interviewer: Bonesets?

Mr. Cooke: *Eupatorium.* I can't remember the species because there are so many of them – *perfoliatum* that is the species. Look at the stalk that comes up. It grows several feet tall. The stalk on the lower leaves looks like it was driven through the leaves. It starts off as two leaves opposite each other but they overlap each other and becomes one leaf- grows together and is known as a doctor of signatures. In other words, what it looks like is probably what it cures – they say it would cure bones. If you wash it and break it and the properties are properly prepared it, it does aid in the resetting of bones, so it is called boneset.

Interviewer: Is that spelled bone and set and is it one word?

Mr. Cooke: Once you start with lobelia – she called it beasely, *Syphalato cardnalis*. It is a little blue flower that grows and it is actually *Lobelia syphalato* and *Lobelia cardnalis*. They are now called lobelia. Big Mama is the one that called it beasely. It is the same thing for poison oak. But a lot of trees can heal, even the birch. The birch themselves that grow down here—I bet you have birch trees even in Iowa.

If on birch trees you cut the little notch right at the bottom of them, you can put a bucket under them and catch the syrup in the spring time and make syrup out of it.

Interviewer: In birch trees?

Mr. Cooke: In birch trees – but you have to boil a lot of syrup down. You don't want to ever hurt those trees, you remember. But you could take those limbs off those trees and scrap the limbs and make tea out of them and it is also a wash for poison oak.

Interviewer: Now I happen to have these gum ball trees. Is there anything you could do with them?

Mr. Cooke: (Laughing) That is *Liquidambur styraciflua*. A lot of times, for instance, poison oak or ivy, we think that they are put here for us, probably they weren't really put here for us but they are winter feed for the birds, because a lot of birds eat those berries. We can't eat those berries. A lot of the plants that grow here are habitat for other species. I happen to like sweet gums. I like to taste the leaf of them. I am sure if I sit and studied it there would be a really good use for those. You can always burn gumballs.

Interviewer: True.

Mr. Cooke: Of course, the popular trees we make whistles out of. We made coverings with *Liriodendron tulipifera*. We make covering for our houses out of them because you can split the

popular bark off. The bark itself you could burn for wood and it is very nice wood to work with.**Interviewer:** Is that a tulip popular? The ones that really gets big!

Mrs. Sullivan: You can split them and that bark will come off them – all the way around.

Mr. Cooke: And the tulip itself has a good sweet smell and taste. Now our people, as far as we cooked with a lot of the herbs, they probably would not be palatal to modern tongues. Not because they taste bad but because they are not used to it. In the American Indian Society, there is a lot of alcoholism and diabetes. It is because our people were missing the gene to process the refined sugars because we never used it. Both alcoholism and diabetes are caused by refined sugars.

Interviewer: That is why our country has so much more diabetes.

Mrs. Sullivan: If you take the elder bark, you can use that for medicine too.

Mr. Cooke: There is another thing with the elder bark.

Mrs. Sullivan: I can remember my mama boiling the elder berry *Sambucas canadensis.* My grandfather had what you called dropsy then. His legs swelled real big and she would bathe and wash his legs in the boiled elder bark. I don't know if it did anything good or not, but she did it.

Mr. Cooke: In the Pocahontas movie, the Disney one, when we go to the schools and talk, I say the only thing that is true in the whole movie is that the willow tree talks.

Interviewer: That is the true thing? (Laughter)

Mr. Cooke: The willow tree really does talk and that *is Salix nigra* because it is black willow. We would take those and take the bark off that tree, right off the limbs, don't go and actually pull it off the tree, but take the small limbs and the white part of that bark is aspirin. That is what that is. You break that down and you can make teas out of that also.

Another very good plant is *Lindera benzoin* which is spice bush. If you rub against that, it is the same family as the sassafras, you smell a gun oil type of smell, kind of reminds me of gun oil but it is also called fever bush because you can drink teas out of their leaves and the limbs and it can actually cure or break fevers. I have used those on myself before. It also has a little berry that comes out at the end of the year that tastes like nutmeg or allspice. If you use that and you cook with it, it will give you a nutmeg type flavor. They don't freeze well. It is one of those things that you have to catch it when it comes through.

Another plant we used was the paw paw. That's named *Asimina triloba.*

Interviewer: What do I need to make them grow better? I always remember the song. Where I lived paw paws would never grow, so I tried to grow them here. I finally got some to last more than one year. The ones I have now are at least three years old, but they are little.

Mr. Cooke: Talk to it. Where are you planting them?

Interviewer: Well, other trees are over it, so it has a little shade. I don't know if it is getting enough water.

Mr. Cooke: It is supposed to grow where it is wetter. It likes water. You do have to talk to it. Just remember plants are people too.

Interviewer: Right.

Mr. Cooke: But the paw paw is an Algonquin word. The actual name *Asimina triloba,* after the Algonquin of the tree. The triloba loved it because the flower has 3 petals on it. Beautiful little flower. I love paw paws. They make real good bread. They also have nice fruit to it. I'd rather have the fruit cooked in the bread because if you eat too many of them, well they are a laxative. You will find that out.

Interviewer: How long will it take before you have this fruit? I hope I live long enough.

Mrs. Sullivan: Actually, I never knew what a paw paw was until the kids were grown,

Mr. Cooke: If you need a laxative another nice plant is chickweed.

Interviewer: Oh, I have tons of that.

Mr. Cooke: Nobody will ever try to eat it, but you can actually eat chickweed *Stellaria media* svp, meaning several species, and it tastes fine. If you eat too much of it, it acts as a laxative. But these things that we look at in our yard that we call weeds are actually nice friendly plants. They are nice plant people that we chose to ignore all these years.

Mrs. Sullivan: I can remember my grandmother going out and in the first of the spring to gather up dandelions, pokeberry, I can't remember the rest. But there were five or six weeds that would come up. She would cook a bunch of them together and make us eat it the first of the year. Have a clean out from the winter.

Mr. Cooke: Now, everybody thinks sumac is highly poisonous. There is only one sumac that's poisonous and that is called *Rhus vernix* or poisonous sumac and it has loose white berries.Staghorn sumac has red/purple berries on it; they are good dyes. You can actually make some teas out of them.

Interviewer: It is kind of purple, isn't it? I have a lot of sumac where I live.

Mrs. Sullivan: That is how my husband Garnett's mother sent herself through college. Grandma picked those berries and sent herself through college. She made dyes from the berries.

Mr. Cooke: You can use those big clusters of berries for dyes.

I have found nothing in the woods that I am really allergic to. Finally, I guess last year, I broke out and couldn't understand but it was because of Ailanthus altissima which is commonly called railroad palm. Some call it tree of heaven. It always pops up by railroads. However, when I finally did the research, it is also Chinese sumac. It is a sumac family that comes from China; it is an import. It is not something that I am near normally, so I had no tolerance to it and it does

break me out. That is the first thing that ever did. Now I got into the honeysuckle when I was little (laughing) and that swelled me up, but I do think that was something else I got into.
Mrs. Sullivan: Didn't the doctor prove it was Darlene's bubble bath?
Mr. Cooke: That is what it was – Darlene's bubble bath.
Interviewer: Now that tree of heaven is not considered a good thing. It kind of takes over.
Mr. Cooke: It is just misunderstood. We probably haven't discovered its secrets to know what

it can be used for. But I seriously break out from touching it because sap gets on you and draws a rash.
Mrs. Sullivan: Cindy is allergic to what is called formosa?
Mr. Cooke: Oh, formosa bush or silk trees. The formosa, *Albizia julibrissin* has little pink plumes on it – if you touch it, it will close up – very sensitive tree.
Interviewer: They are common around here too?
Mr. Cooke: They used to be. They are probably Japanese. *Lespedeza formosa.*
Everything in life is tied to the next thing. In other words in a story, Stalking Wolf, Apache elder, took one of his students out and taught him. He said I am going to teach you; he was a medicine man and he did coyote teaching. His coyote teaching is as he is watches over you; he lets you make your own mistakes. As long as you don't get hurt but you actually make your own discoveries and learn. He explained to him how to hunt. You are taking your plants to carelessly. You are not showing your proper respect to the plant people. Here is what I want you to do. I have taught you to trap; I have taught you to catch rabbits; I have taught you how to catch the different kind of small animals. What I am going to do now is let you go get a deer. You can't shoot him with a bow; you have to kill it with your hands. So I am going to take you in the woods and you are going to find a deer that is the weakest in the whole group. You are going to do just like nature does; you are not going to find one that is healthy that can make it through the whole winter; you going to find one that is going to die anyway and you make sure you take it. You find a little deer with a broken horn and he is all crippled up and he can hardly go. So, the boy kept following the crippled deer for days, He became attached to this little deer, but he knew he had to kill it. He finally waited at a tree and the deer got careless and he dropped down and killed it by driving his spear. All that was coming from his face was his tears. He dressed it took it back and he was crying the whole time and grandfather walked out of the woods behind a tree and said that was hard wasn't it? Yes it was, the boy said. Stalking Wolf said when you get to the point in life where you break a blade of grass and you feel a strange remorse; then you understand the plant people. Everything is important.
It is the same, as far as I concerned. I like seeing all the things in the woods. Each one is interrelated with the rest, even down to your big trees. If you want for instance to make a bow

drill - say you were in the woods and you were completely alone and all you had was the woods itself, the first thing you would do would be to find one of the pine people. Around here we have many different pine that grow naturally. Virginia pine mainly, but you can go down and pull up one of the roots and take the bark off of it and work the root around the tree until it becomes cordage which is string and you wrap it around a bow drill and that is how you would start your fire. So every tree there can be used for something. All the cedar trees …Fire is the big thing. You have to make fire, if you can't make fire, you can't live.

Interviewer: You know how to do that I gather.

Mr. Cooke: Oh, yes

Mrs. Sullivan: I never could.

Mr. Cooke: The easiest way – well there are two ways. Oh, that brings up another whole bunch of people we can talk about the Mullein People?

Interviewer: Mullein?

Mr. Cooke: Mullein People. It grows around here and you seen them every day and you probably don't realize who they are and until you have looked at them and introduced yourself, they don't stand out because they just blend into society. They have big green velvety leaves that grow in a rosette. They are only about this tall usually. (Indicates height) They are not but six inches or less tall at first. As far as the basil leaves go, you know the round leaves at the bottom, they are real fuzzy leaves, if you were to touch it; they are real fuzzy- like lamb's ear. Under the middle of this grows a stalk. The scientific name is mullein, *Verbascum thapsus*. It grows up probably about two to three feet tall. It has yellow flowers on it. You can use the plant itself right at that point, you can use those stalks because the stalks become dry, and they become a natural fire stick. They make excellent fire sticks. They are perfectly dry and they got that powder of the plant all the way up the tree. It heats it up. It has many other uses such as teas, etc. I guess plants are classified as food, or used for medicine, or for utilitarian purposes – in other words use for something other than food or medicine – like for fire. Everybody should know the plants. Plants like people to pay them mind.

Interviewer: I can see that. I need you to come to my place and identify them. I also need to use the common name; I can't pronounce the Latin names.

Mr. Cooke: I guess when I went in the woods with some botanists, they would go over and look at them and say well this is this, that, or the other and I would know better. I already knew what the tree was. (Laughing)

Interviewer: You didn't say they were in error.

Mr. Cooke: No, I did not say they were in error. I just say we always called it this; we always called it black gum or sweet gum. Black gum is *Nyssa sylvatica*; sweet gum is *Liquidambar styraciflua*. You just learn because you are in the woods so much. You really know which tree

it is just by the bark. I don't think it is my job to correct people. People ask me a question and I think it is my job to answer them with the truth as I know it. But, my job is to not make them to conform to what I think. It is ok, if they want to call it something else.

Interviewer: In your world, when there was illness or sickness on the plant itself. What do you do to make it well?

Mr. Cooke: When the plant is sick? That is a real problem with today's plants. For instance, Potomac Creek is full of cattails. I would prefer to eat my cattails off a stream some where else because you have sewage plants dumping into all our rivers. They are treating the sewage but they aren't taking the heavy metals out; we are killing bacteria and viruses with ultraviolet lights, but bottom line, we are still dumping sewage. All the different chemicals we put on our yards are all running off into our rivers. Eating fish, our people are dying from eating the fish. We tend to turn our head and say it doesn't exist. The government has said our people have treated this sewage; our government has blessed us with chemicals. When you gather plants along the road, all the exhaust fumes going by, all the hydrocarbons are going over on those plants. Even the roadsides down here are excellent spots to get plants compared to the plants on 95. On Interstate 95, I would not want to bother with the plant people unless it is the last resort. Plants have a tendency to take the toxin and to cure themselves.

Interviewer: Are there any other herbs that you think are helpful medically for people other than the ones we have talked about?

Mr. Cooke: Foxglove. I can think of two more also. Foxglove grows in the yard. They are little flowers that hang down. Have you ever seen foxglove?

Interviewer: I don't think I could identify it. I have heard of it.

Mr. Cooke: *Digitalis* is what we treat hearts with and we get digitalis from foxgloves. I used to do some plant tours on Lauck's Island with Friends of the Rappahannock. Dr. Robert Wheeler, a cardiac person, said we have to keep digitalis levels on all the people we treat because we don't know how strong the plants were that they used to make from foxglove. There is also a plant called dogbane. It is *Apocynum cannabinum*, it is also called Indian hemp. You can't smoke this because it is not that kind of hemp. The reason it is called Indian hemp is because you can take this plant to dry. It looks like milkweed. But when it hangs down, instead of one pod, it has two. Dogbane has a reddish color skin also. So, we would make something known as cordage or string. You would take those plants and rub them together like that because once they grow up they become dry and have a hollow tube. If you take them and you stack them up like that together, then you just have the cordage that you can twist. You will always have to wash your hands after you do that because if you lick your hands it affects your heart.

Interviewer: Wow.

Mr. Cooke: The medicine that works, works because it poisons us a little bit. It makes our body react to a poison, if you think about it in those terms. Also, in the milkweed family, you've got the pleurisy root, *Ascelpias tuberosa*. I believe it is. It has an orange top and is called swamp milkweed – instead of the white top that regular green milkweed has. It is good for treating pleurisy.

Interviewer: Is regular milkweed good for anything? We had a lot of that in Iowa.

Mr. Cooke: Every plant is good for something. I would have to look at my notes to see. I have literally probably at least a hundred or so journals on just plants. I have Gray's Manual of *Botany* that is like just like the medical one. I have one on botany that is this thick. *The Manual of the Vascular Flora of the Carolinas* is the kind of book that would tell me what those plants are and how best to describe them. You learn all kinds of little tricks such as with the red oaks and the white oaks; if you take the acorn top off, take the little cap off, the fuzz in it is the red oak; if it has no fuzz it is a white oak.

Interviewer: By the way, is that why this area is called White Oak?

Mr. Cooke: It is probably called White Oak because it is part of William Fitzhugh's White Oak farm.

Interviewer: Okay.

Mr. Cooke: I don't know if it was White Oak before that. I know the church out here, by Danny's Museum (White Oak Civil War Museum) was called the White Oak Meeting House around 1790. It goes back pretty much in time, but it is probably because of the dominance of white oaks. The 15 acres here is called White Oak Forest.

Interviewer: I am trying to think of all the trees that grow here. I wish I knew more so I could ask you more questions.

Mr. Cooke: You have *Prunus serotina*. That is your wild cherry. Wild cherry you see has the tent caterpillars. That is okay. They need somewhere to eat. You can use the bark to a certain limit, before it becomes toxic because all the fruit trees contain some cyanide. The cherries themselves are edible. But all of the fruit trees, including the apple trees, contain cyanide in the bark or especially the seeds which are not good for you.

Interviewer: You would probably find something good to say about bagworms?

Mr. Cooke: Bagworms feed birds. Another example, in Prince William County, I can't remember what the department is called, but the lady is in charge of all the trees that are being planted. I want to call her a horticulturist but that is not what she is called. She does not like Virginia pines. She says they are nasty and should all be taken down. Well, I went to a lawyer there on one project that we were doing and I explained to her that there is a certain bird that only lives in Virginia pine and if he has no habitat where is he going to live. Maybe that little bird is the only thing that something else eats. So you start the whole species falling apart. We

could fall apart by taking a little bit away. The pine bores that live in those trees that everybody fusses about, well they feed woodpeckers. Every plant has a use; every animal has a use. I have watched the scientific channel a lot. They keep talking about going to Mars and that kind of scares me. That usually upsets something. You talk about colonizing Mars, maybe they know something they haven't told us yet. I an not going to worry about it but one of the things they want to do, they say we know how to change the Martian atmosphere and turn it into the oxygen to make life for us. With global warming, if we put that type of gas in the atmosphere that makes carbon dioxide and they got plenty of carbon dioxide on it already, so they will be planting plants on Mars sometime and growing seeds and turning into something. But they don't think that what is already there we might be bothering. That is another story. But far as plants myself I can't think of any plant I don't like, including althiantis. It is okay. I just don't put my hand in it. (Laughter)

Interviewer: I have some bamboo you can also have that somebody brought in and it just took over.

Mr. Cooke: We actually had a native bamboo. What is this Mama? Is this type of bamboo? (Looking at a plant on the table.)

Interviewer: That is a type of bamboo. My honeysuckle fights it out with the bamboo.

Mr. Cooke: Kudzu. Kudzu can grow three feet a day. You can sit there and watch it grow. It is amazing. But finally somebody found that you can make wreaths out of it

Interviewer: You can make what out of it?

Mr. Cooke: Wreaths, like grape wreaths

Mrs. Sullivan: Well, could you make the baskets out of it?

Mr. Cooke: Yes, you could make baskets out of it.

Interviewer: I think we need to make something out of it because there is so much of it.

Mr. Cooke: We are in a society now that we throw everything away. Everything is a throwaway. Nothing is used. Nothing is saved.

Interviewer: One that really bothers me is – they rake their leaves and then they put them in plastic bags to be taken to the dump. Now, that is asinine.

Mr. Cooke: I agree. When they get it in the dump they have all those plastic bags, it is amazing how much plastic. I think that is probably one of the purposes of man; it is the only species that can invent plastic. The earth could not make it any other way. We alone as a species can make plastic.

Interviewer: You mentioned a different type of hemp before. I don't know if you want to talk about that. You know hemp actually used to be useful as cordage as you called it. Can that even be grown in the United States legally or do they think any hemp is dangerous? Marijuana – they made such a big deal out of it.

Mr. Cooke: When Washington was here, he had a hemp plantation. He actually grew hemp. In fact, John Smith said or Captain Argall said when he sailed up Potomac Creek that they had pine trees that grow perfectly straight and I know he was referring to Atlantic white cedar. He also said, "They grow hemp of quality unsurpassed" so there were some growing here then. It wasn't the common dogbane that we now use as I was telling you earlier for cordage. At that time, it was actual hemp that was grown for ropes. I don't know if they smoked the hemp or not. (Laughter)

Interviewer: At least they have a legit use for it.

Mr. Cooke: They still do, they still sell a very good rope. You buy it from Manila now.

Interviewer: We could have made it as a product here still.

Mr. Cooke: Surprisingly, two big plants were exported during colonial times. They were both major crops. One was indigo and we had false indigo that grows around here. There was enough indigo grown to make the dye which was used as an export. The other one was ginseng. American Ginseng, *Panax quinquefolius*, is much more sought after than Korean ginseng because that ginseng grows too fast. The little small plants around here are very condensed and have hard roots. They are better for you supposedly. I have found that on Crow's Nest and down around the Belvedere Beach area.

You have something known as Indian cucumber root. I eat a lot of those when I am in the woods. I nibble on that a lot of times and they are just a little small plant that probably grows about six inches or at least under a foot high and it has a long white root that tastes like cucumbers.

Interviewer: I never heard of that one.

Mr. Cook: You have your pennyworts, wort, meaning created to cure, the opposite from bane, or cutleaf toothwort, *Dentatom dentaria*, that you actually use to treat your teeth with and their roots taste like peppermint. So, I eat a lot of roots. My kids used to say to other kids, you can come over and Dad will take you out to the yard and graze with you. (Laughter)

Interviewer: You are certainly very knowledgeable about a lot of thing on this planet. I really appreciate you talking about it. I don't know if you have just one more plant that you would like to mention. I know you can go on forever because you know so much.

Mr. Cooke: Did I mention chicory?

Interviewer: No – for coffee?

Mr. Cooke: If you look outside the road every day when you drive to work, there is a little flower that grows and it has a little stalk that is kind of like this. It's not wonderful looking. And it has little small leaves on it and right at the top of it has big blue flowers. That is called chicory, *Cickorum intybus* .Do you know what the Bachelor Button looks like?

Interviewer: Yes I do.

Mr. Cooke: It is about the same size only instead of being formed that way; they are little flat petals about one-sixteenth of an inch– that long. That is chicory. Dig that root up. You cook it in the oven and dry it and it becomes an excellent coffee

Interviewer: That is what they used in the Civil War, right?

Mr. Cooke: There is chicory everywhere. All of these plants, they are here and we just don't see them.

Interviewer: Are they here now – at this time of the year? Is this when you get chicory? What time of the year is the best time?

Mr. Cooke: Now, it is getting harder to identify them because they are getting in the winter condition. Usually with all the plants- of course the roots if you know where the chicory is, you can go find it still because it is around. There isn't just a whole lot of it like there was. You would want to use the roots that were bigger or longer; you would just want part of the root; you would just pull part of the roots because you want the chicory to keep going. You want to give proper prayers.

Interviewer: I will be much nicer to plants and I am going to talk to my paw paws.

Mr. Cooke: Aloes

Interviewer: A lot of people have that plant. We buy that plant.

Mr. Cooke: You know the way aloe is when you break it open and you put it on you and how it sooths everything. Jewel weed that grows in the wild does the same thing. It has similar type juice.

Interviewer: I am going to look for a picture of that Jewel weed and put it in here. I want to know what that looks like. I want to learn more.

Mr. Cooke: I will get you another name for it. It is called spotted touch-me nots because they grow these little flowers and there are some yellow ones called *Impatiens pallida* and the orange ones with the little dots on it are called *Impatiens carpensis*. They are very nice plants.

Interviewer: Well this has really been informative. You should take this show on the road. I mean you could give very interesting lectures to people at the library.

Mr. Cooke: I am thinking about doing that and I have already rented the web space putting plant information right on the pages with pictures of the plant through the different seasons. Don't give medical advice.

Interviewer: You will need a disclaimer.

Mr. Cooke: Just have the information where people can be shown how to use the plants. I know in a lot of the books I've read, it tells you what you need to use it for, but it doesn't tell you how to make it. It doesn't tell you, for instance, to boil it through three boils of water. They would just say boil it.

Interviewer: They don't give you the actual advice or how-to?

Mr. Cooke: I was trying to think of one of the ones where you would boil it three times. You have to boil it in the water more times because you would want to take the poison out.

Interviewer: They don't usually go into that?

Mr. **Cooke:** No. They just tell you to make a tea out of it for instance. They don't tell you what part of the plant for you to make the tea.

Interviewer: You would fill in a niche that other people haven't done. That would be very helpful.

Mr. Cooke: I just want to tell the rest of the tribe. I've got to pass my knowledge on because I am getting older now and I have to find some…

Mrs. Sullivan: When are you going to start writing some books?

Mr. Cooke: I don't know. I have to find someone to write them. (Laughing)

Interviewer: I really thank you. This has been most enjoyable

Mr. Cooke: You are welcome.

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