



## Urla Baker Row

This interview was conducted at the home of Urla Row on Jackson Trail West in the summer and fall of 2008 by Patricia Weinhardt who has been her friend for some years.

**Interviewer:** Good morning, Urla.

**Mrs. Row:** Good morning.

**Interviewer:** I want to ask you first if you'll tell me your name and what year you were born and where you were born.

**Mrs. Row:** My name is Urla Baker Row, and I was born August 28, 1924 at home in Spotsylvania.

**Interviewer:** And what was the name of the area in Spotsylvania?

**Mrs. Row:** The Fork.

**Interviewer:** And what was your dad's and mom's names?

**Mrs. Row:** Paul Moncure Baker was my dad. He was born on March 2, 1888. Julia Virginia Burruss was my mother. She was born on April 18, 1889.

**Interviewer:** Do you know if they were both born in Spotsylvania County also?

**Mrs. Row:** I know she was and I'm pretty sure he was.

**Interviewer:** And did you have any brothers and sisters?

**Mrs. Row:** I had one brother named Paul Mansfield Baker. He was eight years older than I. My mother lost two children, one to spinal meningitis and another one was stillborn.

**Interviewer:** Were you born at home or in the hospital?

**Mrs. Row:** I was born at home (delivered) by my neighbor that lived across the street, a woman named Jennie Hicks.

**Interviewer:** Did she come to your home when your mom was in labor then?

**Mrs. Row:** Yes, she did.

**Interviewer:** Tell me a little bit about your very early life, what are some of the things you remember from when you were a little girl.

**Mrs. Row:** I used to follow my dad when he plowed the fields, barefooted and (down through the furrows).

**Interviewer:** Did you go to school in Spotsylvania? What was the name of the school you went to?  
**Mrs. Row:** The first school I went to was the Little Forks School which was built on my place-- on the farm where I lived in Spotsylvania.

**Interviewer:** What did your dad do for a living?

**Mrs. Row:** He was a farmer.

**Interviewer:** Did you have a big farm?

**Mrs. Row:** We had a hundred acres to begin with.

**Interviewer:** Did you have cows or horses....

**Mrs. Row:** We had several cows and two horses.

**Interviewer:** Did you plant a big garden?

**Mrs. Row:** We planted gardens.

**Interviewer:** Did your mom do a lot of canning?

**Mrs. Row:** Yes, she did. Yes, she did.

**Interviewer:** When you went off to the grocery store, what kind of things would you buy?

**Mrs. Row:** We didn't buy much! Sugar, flour. Most of the things we raised, we raised hogs, we raised chickens, which gave us our eggs and we had chickens to eat and we had pork to eat. This was during the Depression years, now, when I was a small child.

**Interviewer:** I'm interested in hearing a little more about the Depression. How did it affect your family?



**Mrs. Row:** I didn't hear much about the Depression. Most of the families in our community had enough food to eat, and clothes to wear. I remember men coming to the back door of my mother's house, asking for food or work. She always gave them something to eat and sent them on their way. Mom made all of our clothes and we passed them down. We had our Sunday best which we only wore to church. I don't think we wore hats during that time.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Interviewer:** Now going back to your school, you said first you went to a one-room school.

**Mrs. Row:** First and second grade.

**Interviewer:** And then after that?

**Mrs. Row:** I went to Belmont which was a grade school and a high school combined, Belmont High School.

**Interviewer:** And you graduated from Belmont?**Mrs. Row:** No, my last year of school I went to Spotsylvania, which was a consolidated school in 1940. In that year all the county schools combined. The school was built in 1939. I graduated in 1941. I went there the year of 40 and 41.

**Interviewer:** Where was that school located?**Mrs. Row:** At Spotsylvania Courthouse, which is now the Snow Library.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Interviewer:** Did you and your family have nearby neighbors?

**Mrs. Row:** Yes, on one side we had Mr. Guss Crafton and on the other side was my grandmother's place, where my grandmother lived and her son Teasdale and his wife Elizabeth and their three children, three daughters.

**Interviewer:** Now tell me what your grandmother's name was, and was this on your mother's side or your dad's side?

**Mrs. Row:** My mother's side.

**Interviewer:** And what was her name?

**Mrs. Row:** Rosa Virginia Burruss. She had twelve children.

**Interviewer:** Oh...and one of them was your mom?

**Mrs. Row:** Right. My mother was one of the first to die, she had breast cancer and died in July 1940.

**Interviewer:** How old were you at that time?

**Mrs. Row:** I was almost 16. She died in July and I was 16 in August.

**Interviewer:** So that left your dad and your brother and you?

**Mrs. Row:** Right.

**Interviewer:** What kind of things did you do for entertainment or recreation? Did you ever go into Fredericksburg, maybe to the movies or to...

**Mrs. Row:** We went to Orange, mostly, we were nearer to Orange.

**Interviewer:** Okay, you were closer to Orange than you were to Fredericksburg.

**Mrs. Row:** Right. We would go up there perhaps about once a month to get a few groceries and banking in Orange.

**Interviewer:** Did your family go to church back then regularly?

**Mrs. Row:** We went once a month to our home church, which was Macedonia, but the old Presbyterian Church near us was Kirk O'Cliff and they had young people's meetings there and my brother and I would go to that.

**Interviewer:** Was that once a month also?

**Mrs. Row:** No, we'd go more often than that, and we could walk to that one, that one was close enough for us to walk.

**Interviewer:** Did you go there for the Sunday services or for the youth activities?**Mrs.**

**Row:** Mostly youth activities.

**Interviewer:** And what kind of activities did you do then? Bible studies or games?**Mrs.**

**Row:** Both.

**Interviewer:** Did you have a best girlfriend at that time as you were growing up and in school?

**Mrs. Row:** Well, I guess on one side, on my grandmother's side, was Nancy Burruss, my cousin, and on the other side was Kitty (Crafton). Across the river, which I didn't mention earlier, was Erma Bennett. They lived across the river and she was a very good friend and I used to go and spend the night with her.

**Interviewer:** Do you remember what the name of that river was? Was it a big river?

**Mrs. Row:** Kind of big.

**Interviewer:** How did you get across most of the time? Was there a foot log?**Mrs. Row:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** She'd come to your house and you'd go to her house...

**Mrs. Row:** Right. We'd sleep over like children do. I didn't have any sisters my age and I would go to see them. Then we'd go swimming in the summer, sleigh riding in the winter. My brother built an old sled.

**Interviewer:** And I think you did some ice skating, didn't you? The river would freeze over?

**Mrs. Row:** Not much. We had an ice pond. My brother was a very good ice skater. I never

did learn until after I was married.

**Interviewer:** Now you were telling me a little bit that your mother died when you were quite young. Can you give me a little history on what her illness was and how you treated it or not treated it?

**Mrs. Row:** I'm told, one of my friends told me years later, that my mother had a lump in her breast for several years before she had it checked, so that when she had it checked I must have been in my teens then. But I was told that she had that lump since I was born. Then she went to Richmond and I think she had something similar to what is radiation now. But she didn't live long. She got ill in April and died in July.

**Interviewer:** I noticed in my papers that she was 51 at the time, and you were about 14 years old.

**Mrs. Row:** Fifteen, almost 16.

**Interviewer:** I see where she raised turkeys when you were growing up.

**Mrs. Row:** They were our cash crop. We bought our first car with turkeys. She'd raise anywhere from 80 to 100 a year. Now they didn't have sense enough to come in out of the rain, so during a thunderstorm she'd be out there trying to round them up to get them in the house.

**Interviewer:** Did she sell the turkeys during Thanksgiving time, or just any time anybody needed any?

**Mrs. Row:** Between Thanksgiving and Christmas. I learned how to pick turkeys almost as soon as I could stand up to them.

**Interviewer:** So you always slaughtered them and dressed them and got them ready for Christmas...

**Mrs. Row:** Yes, and before we got our first car my father would take them to Orange in the wagon in barrels. They would be picked and dressed.

**Interviewer:** Now one other thing I'm interested in, I think your family was always quite a musical family. Your mom and dad both played instruments.

**Mrs. Row:** My dad played the fiddle and my mother played the banjo.

**Interviewer:** How about your brother?

**Mrs. Row:** He didn't play much. He loved to dance too well!

**Interviewer:** And I believe you learned to play the piano so well you've been playing in your church for many years, is that correct?

**Mrs. Row:** Since 1948 I've been with the church playing off and on.

**Interviewer:** And this is which church?

**Mrs. Row:** Shady Grove Methodist Church in Spotsylvania.

**Interviewer:** You've been the pianist there for all those years...you have a little bit of help now I understand, and are thankful for that.

**Mrs. Row:** Yeah, right, and I've had help from time to time.

**Interviewer:** Now let's go back a little bit to your early days when you had music in the home. Can you remember some of the special times and the special events you had with the music?

**Mrs. Row:** Oh, we'd push the chairs back and dance around our living room, which wasn't very large by the time we got my piano in there. Oh, we all played some and we danced and had a good time. And I can remember my parents putting me to bed when we would go to other places, and taking me upstairs and putting me to bed, and they would dance way into the night and they would have a nice meal. They didn't drink too much like they do now. They'd drink some, I think. But they'd have that big meal and they would dance some more.

**Interviewer:** How did you get your piano?

**Mrs. Row:** My mother bought it second hand.

**Interviewer:** Were you already playing music by the time you got your piano?**Mrs. Row:** Yes, I played a little on my grandmother's.

**Interviewer:** Do you remember when you started playing music yourself?

**Mrs. Row:** I think I was not much more than six years old.

**Interviewer:** Did your mom teach you, or did you sort of pick it up...

**Mrs. Row:** I pretty much picked it up myself. We had an old Victrola. We used to play records on that Victrola and I'd play a record and then sit down and play it on the piano.

**Interviewer:** Now, when you were real young, you didn't have electricity. How did you preserve stuff? How did you keep your meat and stuff from spoiling?

**Mrs. Row:** We had what we called the ice pond. My father would cut blocks of ice from there and we had what was called an ice house which was into the ground with just a roof over it, in straw, with ice in it. It would keep from wintertime until late in August, then we would put our milk and butter in the spring which was not far from the house, and we kept it in the stream.

**Interviewer:** You were talking about in the spring when you separated the milk from the cream.

**Mrs. Row:** We had what was called a separator that turned by hand. It had two spouts on it; the cream would come out of one spout and the milk out of the other. We had our own butter; we sold butter, and we sold cream.

**Interviewer:** You were telling me one day about when you got your first car, when your dad got the first car...

**Mrs. Row:** Yeah, I think mother's turkeys helped to buy that car. It was a Model A Ford, a 1928.

**Interviewer:** And your dad would drive it?

**Mrs. Row:** And he drove it.

**Interviewer:** Very good. So we've got you up now to you're about a teenager, and you didn't do much around the town except go to the church activities. Did you ever have anything called a box supper?

**Mrs. Row:** No, but we had cake walks. I remember those. People would make cakes and then we'd go stand under a number or go around under a number and whoever drew the lucky number would win the cake!

**Interviewer:** That was more like a dance, too, wasn't it? You had food and dances also, more like a social.

**Mrs. Row:** Yeah, it was a social.

**Interviewer:** Okay, I think that's a good part for today. We'll get some more things together and see if we can figure out where to go after this.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Interviewer:** Now Mrs. Row, I want to talk a little bit more about your growing up years before we move on, and I understand from getting to know you and talking to you that your mother was quite a woman and a hard worker, and she did a lot of things together, and sometimes she was asked to go and help out the neighbors when they had illness in the family, or maybe a baby was being born. Can you tell me about one of those times that you remember because you went along with her?

**Mrs. Row:** Well, we had a neighbor named Waddy. And Grace was the first name of the wife and she was to deliver a baby. So when my mother found out about it, she took me by the hand and we walked up to Grace Waddy's. And she had a little boy that was one day old, and I thought it was such a pretty child. His name was T.C. Waddy,(former sheriff [1979-1995] and now the Livingston District county supervisor. )

**Interviewer:** So you helped your mom with that little job...

**Mrs. Row:** Yes, I think as well as I remember we took something with us, we always took something...

**Interviewer:** You probably took food...

**Mrs. Row:** We did.

**Interviewer:** Well, that's really interesting. Now let's talk just a minute about when you were growing up, now, this is the times when you were still a little girl, do you remember very much about...I like to talk about the social events. Do you remember any weddings? When people were getting married, did they have big elaborate weddings usually?

**Mrs. Row:** I can't recall right now. No, I don't think we did.

**Interviewer:** Well, you were in the Depression times, so probably they were more like home weddings. And how about funerals? Do you remember if people still had the

visitations in the homes?

**Mrs. Row:** Yes, they did.

**Interviewer:** Did you sit up over night?

**Mrs. Row:** I think they did some, yes. When my mother died, and my father also years later, we would take them to Johnson's Funeral Home up in Orange County. And they were buried at the old churches there near Spotsylvania, Mount Hermon Church.

**Interviewer:** Is there a church graveyard?

**Mrs. Row:** There's a church graveyard and all the names are on there, my mother's brothers, several of them. My father and my mother. And my brother and his wife, years later lost two children and they're there also. At the cemetery at Mount Hermon.

**Interviewer:** Now your mom had a couple of babies that died, right? Are they buried there also?

**Mrs. Row:** I think they're buried at the old burying grounds over at my grandmother's, which was the next farm over from us.

**Interviewer:** So when you had weddings they were probably small family affairs, with maybe a wedding supper at the house....

**Mrs. Row:** I think so...

**Interviewer:** And funerals were family occasions—the family comes and gathers around and has a service either at the home or at the church—just about like it is today.

**Mrs. Row:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** All right, we're going to take a break, then we'll gather our thoughts and we'll come back another day. I love talking to you and hearing you and I'm glad to know you.

**Mrs. Row:** Thank you.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Interviewer:** This is our second interview with Mrs. Urla Row, of Spotsylvania, on a beautiful summer morning in July, 2008.

**Mrs. Row:** Good morning.

**Interviewer:** We're going to start out by remembering a little bit about when you graduated from high school. Can you remind me of the name of your high school and what year you graduated.

**Mrs. Row:** Spotsylvania High School in the year of 1941.

**Interviewer:** About how many were in your graduating class?

**Mrs. Row:** There were 72 of us, total.

**Interviewer:** That's a pretty big class, wasn't it, for that time.

**Mrs. Row:** Yes, it was.



**Interviewer:** After you graduated from high school, did you work outside the home?

**Mrs. Row:** No, I remember staying with my grandmother some, and I worked in Orange briefly in a store, prior to Christmas.

**Interviewer:** When did you meet your husband?

**Mrs. Row:** I think it was about the year of 1940. This girl I went to school with brought him up to my place to meet me. He'd been in the woods, gathering wood for the winter time.

**Interviewer:** What kind of courtship did you have...Did you go out on dates?

**Mrs. Row:** Yes, we went out on some dates. And this was prior to his going back to college. He had been out of school for a few years and he was going back to finish college at Virginia Tech.

**Interviewer:** Okay and then the war was on...

**Mrs. Row:** Yes. He went into the air force (then the U.S. Army Air Corps). He was a pilot and he went into the air force as a lieutenant, by having his one year of military at Virginia Tech.

**Interviewer:** And he flew some missions during the war, is that right?

**Mrs. Row:** Thirty-five missions over Germany. He was in the Eighth Air Force.

**Interviewer:** He was in the service before you were married?

**Mrs. Row:** Yes. He had a leave in Miami Beach. He asked my father's permission to marry me and we went to Florida and we were married in Cheraw, NC. This was on May 21, 1945.

**Interviewer:** So you drove down to Florida and stopped ... on the way down.

**Mrs. Row:** Yes. When we came back from Florida, he went back to school that fall. We were married in May, 1945 and when he went back to school at Virginia Tech, I went with him. We lived there for two years. We had one child then.

**Interviewer:** What was that child's name?

**Mrs. Row:** That was Helen.

**Interviewer:** Helen Row. She married Mike Mullins, right.

**Mrs. Row:** Yes. When we came back from Blacksburg, we moved to Urbanna, VA and he got a job with the Highway Department. We stayed there for six months.

**Interviewer:** In all, how many children did you and George have?



**Mrs. Row:** We had four. Helen was the oldest. Then our son, Sam, then Hannah and Charlotte was the youngest.

**Interviewer:** After you moved back from Urbanna, did you move to the farm?

**Mrs. Row:** We moved in with Mrs. Row. George got a job then at what was known as the Sylvania Plant in Fredericksburg. He got laid off just before time for him to retire. A lot of men did.

**Interviewer:** What was George's mom and dad's names? Can you recall that for me?

**Mrs. Row:** She was Fannie Kent Row and his dad was Horace Row. He lived in Spotsylvania all of his life.

**Interviewer:** Did you ever work outside the home after you and George were married?

**Mrs. Row:** Not until years later. I mostly stayed home with the children and took care of the house.

**Interviewer:** Do you remember when you didn't have any electricity in the home?

**Mrs. Row:** Oh, yes. In the home where I was born and raised until I was 16.

**Interviewer:** How did you keep things cold, or keep things from spoiling?

**Mrs. Row:** We had an ice house. My father got the ice off the pond and cut it up into blocks. We put it into the ice house, which was a hole in the ground with a roof over it.

**Interviewer:** And what kind of activities did you do in the home without electricity?

**Mrs. Row:** We did a lot of reading. We sewed and crocheted. We played music. And of course, we went to bed pretty early.

**Interviewer:** Can you tell me a little bit more about George Row's family. He had how many brothers and sisters?

**Mrs. Row:** He had four sisters, no brothers. The girls names were Mary, Margaret, Nancy and Judy.

**Interviewer:** Tell me a little about the families they married into.

**Mrs. Row:** The oldest one was Mary, who married Burruss Catlett. Then there was Margaret, who married Rolf Houck. Then George, then Nancy, who married Woodrow Humphries, and Judy married Paul Sullivan.

**Interviewer:** George's mother lived a long, long life, didn't she?

**Mrs. Row:** She was almost 99. She loved to play Scrabble, and she usually won all of her games.

**Interviewer:** Remind me of the time of year you got married?

**Mrs. Row:** It was in the spring, in May. We then went on to Florida where he had a 10 day vacation that he was having. We had the most wonderful food. We went swimming in the ocean almost every day.

After the 10 days, he said, “Mama, do you think I should get out of the service?” And I said, “Please do”. So we came back to Fayetteville, NC and he got discharged there.

**Interviewer:** Did you live in Spotsylvania after that?

**Mrs. Row:** Yes. We eventually had four children—three girls and one boy. They all settled in Spotsylvania, except for Helen. She lives in West Virginia.

**Interviewer:** Did you ever work outside the home?

**Mrs. Row:** Yes, at different times, I would take a job to help the family, but for the most part, I was a homemaker and Mom. I worked for quite awhile at the Fredericksburg Nursing Home as an aide. George passed away Feb. 28, 1996. Now, I enjoy being in my home with my little dog, Hattie. We have a great place to observe nature and are thankful that God has given us this many years and so many friends. My church family, home family and neighbors all help each other and stay in touch. If any one of us needs anything, someone is always there to help.

**Interviewer:** Mrs. Row, some of us are interested in learning more about the name Urla. Where did the name Urla come from?

**Mrs. Row:** I was named after my mother’s sister, Urla. I have heard that it comes from the name Ursula.

*This interview was edited and slightly rearranged for clarity.*

## **Index**

Baker, Paul Mansfield, 2  
Baker, Paul Moncure, 1  
Baker, Julia Burress, 1  
Belmont School, 3  
Belmont High School, 3  
Bennett, Erma, 4

Blocks of ice for refrigeration, 6  
Breast cancer, 3  
Burruss, Julia Virginia, 1  
Burruss, Nancy, 4  
Burruss, Rosa Virginia, 3  
Cake walks, 7  
Catlett, Mary Row, 10

Crafton, Guss, 3  
 Crafton, Kitty, 4  
 Depression, 2  
 Eighth Air Force, 9  
 Hicks, Jennie, 2  
 Highway Department, 9  
 Houck, Margaret Row , 10  
 Houck, Rolf, 10  
 Humphries, Woodrow, 10  
 ice house, 6  
 Johnson's Funeral Home, 8  
 Kirk O' Cliff, 4  
 Little Forks School, 2  
 Macedonia, 4  
 Miami Beach, 9  
 Model A Ford, 6  
 Mount Hermon Church, 8  
 Mullins, Mike, 9  
 Musical family, 5  
 Pianist, 6  
 Piano, 6  
 Plowed the fields, 2  
 Presbyterian Church , 4  
 Row, Charlotte, 9  
 Row, Fannie Kent, 10  
 Row, George, 1 and throughout  
 Row, Hannah , 9  
 Row, Helen, 9  
 Row, Horace,  
 Row, Judy, 10  
 Row, Nancy, 10  
 Row, Sam, 10  
 Row, Urla, 1 and throughout  
 Separator, 6  
 Shady Grove Methodist Church, 5  
 Sleep over, 4  
 Snow Library, 3  
 Spotsylvania County, 1  
 Spotsylvania High School, 8  
 Sullivan, Paul, 10  
 Sunday best, 3  
 Sylvania Plant, 10  
 The Fork, 1  
 turkeys, 5  
 U.S. Army Air Corps, 9  
 Urbanna, VA, 9  
 Victrola, 6  
 Virginia Tech, 9  
 Waddy, T.C., 7  
 Weinhardt, Pat, 1