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Charles R. Knightstep

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This recording was made by Ruby Morrison of Dunbar, Kanawha County, West Virginia. It was made October 27, 1973. The person I am interviewing is Charles R. Knightstep of Leon, Mason County, West Virginia. Charles Knightstep is 73 years of age. He was born in Jackson County West Virginia and lived most of his life in Mason County.

Knightstep - My father and mother was there I was eating a lot of ice cream and watermellon. My mother thought I'd get sick over it and she told Mrs. Smith not to give me any more ice cream and watermellon. Mrs. Smith, she said, "Oh, Mrs. Knightstep it will not make him sick. He ain't going to eat too much his little stomach isn't big enough to hold it".

Morrison - How old were you then?

Knightstep - About seven.

Morrison - Where was this? Kanawha County?

Knightstep - No, Jackson County.

Morrison - When did you come to Mason County?

Knightstep - Came to Mason County in 1913.

Morrison - You were thirteen years old?

Knightstep - Thirteen years old. People used to ask me when I came and I told them I floated down the river out of Charleston in a hollow log.

Morrison - Coming from Jackson County to Mason County?

Knightstep - No, coming from Kanawha County.

Morrison - You went from Jackson County to Kanawha County?

Knightstep - Kanawha County, 1917.

Morrison - Where did your dad and mother come from? What country or do you know? Or were they born in W. Va.

Knightstep - They were born in Jackson County, W. Va.

Morrison - What did your father do for a living?

Knightstep - He worked on a saw mill and run logs and ties in the river for Don Rogers. Rafted, run logs for sawmill, and worked on the sawmill.

Morrison - In Jackson Co.?

Knightstep - Jackson County.

Morrison - Then what did he do?

Knightstep - Then when we went to Charleston, he went to working on the railroad. Old K & M Railroad. He worked for the railroad company until he died in 1926.

Morrison - What do you remember about your grandparents.

Mostly their canning and things of this type?

Knightstep - Oh, they were like all farm people at that time they had to can to make a living. They weren't too lazy to work and raise their stuff either.

Morrison - What's different in the way they canned then and how you can now?

Knightstep - Well, they had different methods which improved year after year. They first canned in open mouth jars and sometimes five, ten, fifteen and twenty gallon stone jars and put down pickled beans and kraut, corn and anything they could pickle. Pickled meat, pickle the side meat and salted

and smoked their hams and sholders. And their hogs generally always salt-pickled their middlings. And the ears and feet and I'd like to have a good pickled hog foot to eat right now.

Morrison - What about, tell about how your grandfather dried things?

Knightstep - Grandfather Taylor had a place fixed up called his drying kiln. Made out of flat rock and had metal on top of it and he'd haul in dry branches from the woods and build a fire in there and dry apples and dry peaches and dried corn. My mother and I use to dry corn, but we'd put it up on the tin roof on the porch and dry it.

Morrison - Did you say something about drying pumpkins?

Knightstep - Yeh, they dried pumpkins and cut the pumpkin in rings. And hang it on sticks like drying tobacco. And put it up where it would dry. And in the winter time take it down and sometimes you had to take a hatchet and chop it into pieces to get it in a kettle to cook it. Dry so hard and freeze and didn't have no _____. Kept apples and potatoes what called burying them in a hole. Take clean off a place and put down straw and put apples and potatoes on that. Rick it up sometimes be three feet high up in a peak like a hay stack and cover that over with straw and then cover with dirt and dig a trench around it so the water couldn't stand under it. And in the winter time go out a lot of times in the snow, clean snow off the old potato or apple hill and take a mattox and get the dirt out and then reach back in there and get out apples and potatoes.

Morrison - Did your meat consist mostly of pork?

Knightstep - Pork was the most.

Morrison - Was that because you raised your own pigs?

Knightstep - Everybody raised two or three hogs. Had plenty meat, had our own lard and own sausage.

Morrison - What about cows, did you?

Knightstep - Had our own cows, had own milk, butter, cottage cheese.

Morrison - Can you remember how they made cottage cheese?

Knightstep - Why yes, I can see the old big stone crocks, mother and grandmother used to have to strain their milk in and then let it sour and then put it into a muslin poke and take a piece of muslin and sew it up and make a poke out of it like a pillar case and put that in there and hang it out on a clothes line and hang it up someplace and let it drene out and then take it in and put it in a bowl or pan, mix it all up and put sweet cream on it. And them were cottage cheese worth eating then.

Morrison - Did any of your parents, your grandmother make soap?

Knightstep - Yes, made soap - put the old wood ashes in a barrel and get the lye off of them. Put them in the kettle and take all the old off-fallings of the meat, the fat from the pork.

Morrison - How did they get lye from wood ashes? How did they do that?

Knightstep - It would rain on them and they called them lye. Then put that in kettle and boil it down and make soap.

Morrison - With the fat from the --

Knightstep - Yeh - off the entrals and the off-fallings off the pork. All the fat they could put in there. Used to take what you call lye ashes and raised eight row white corn, a real hard flinty corn. It was the best meal corn there was and is yet today if you could get it and take that corn and that lye from wood ashes and put it in an old iron kettle and boil it and make hominy.

Morrison - Would the lye not hurt you?

Knightstep - Take the husk off the grains of corn and that was your hominy. Then they would heat that and put it in jars. Make a paste out of flour. Most generally used flour sacks. Heavy flour sacks and put over the top of that and sealed it up. Put around edge of jar and sides of it and sometimes tie a string around it and keep it all winter. That's the way they done their apple butter. Way they done a lot of their canning was in them open what they didn't pickle. And they had quarts and half gallon stone jars.

Morrison - What about their apple butter. Do you ever remember helping them make their apple butter?

Knightstep - Made their apple butter similiar as they do today only they made it out in an open kettle.

Morrison - About how much would those kettles hold?

Knightstep - Generally always had fifteen and twenty gallon kettles. Sometimes the neighbors would gather in and help peel apples. We'd peel apples for maybe two nights before they

got ready to make their apple butter. Some of them would come in. We had apple peelers stick the apples on there and peel them. Women would core and slice them up and the men would generally do the peeling. Women neighbors would all gather in and generally have a barrel of sweet cider and everybody would have a joyful good time.

Morrison - You said something back there about meal. Can you remember back when they made, or you made your own meal from corn?

Knightstep - Yes, and I've helped make it.

Morrison - Well could you tell me something about it?

Kinghtstep - Well, you take the corn after it's dried and what you called the old stone burrs. There were two round like wheel and they rubbed together and you put that corn down in a hopper. It went down and one of those stones was stationary and the other turned around. And it would grind that meal and it would come out in a little - always little notches cut in that stone and a big notch in it and when it come around to that big notch it would come out. You had to keep buckets or something setting under there to catch your meal. And you'd have to sift it to get the husk out and later years they got to improve the burrs so - made it similiar to like making flour and you'd run it through a silk called it to take that husk out of it and the meal never been no good since.

Morrison - What do you remember about flour? Where would you get it?

Knightstep - Well, take your wheat to the mill and the miller would grind your flour for you. Farmers generally after he'd thrash the wheat was generally dry enough to take to the mill. He'd take a wagon and take a load of wheat to the mill and maybe he'd have to drive half the night and all day to get there and then wait until the miller could grind it for him. Get back home maybe at midnight or next morning with it. He'd always get enough meal and flour to do him all winter and they never run to the store everyday.

Morrison - Did your father or grandfather raise wheat?

Knightstep - Yeh, my grandfathers did.

Morrison - What did kids do then for entertainment?

Knightstep - Generally, the entertainment about all they had, whenever the farmers would make sorghum molasses. We always go to where they were making molasses. Generally make away up into the night. Get around that old molasses pan and get a cane stock. I've had my lips cut many a time dipping that cane stock into, the fellow making molasses generally had one partition in it he'd let us kids dip a wood paddle or a cane stock and get that sorghum on it and eat it and you'd get those cane stocks and they'd cut you lips. Every kid in the country had his lips all cut up, girls and boys alike.

Morrison - You say you had horse and buggys in your days?

Knightstep - Horses, buggys, wagons, and sleds.

Morrison - Can you tell me something about your, maybe something you remember about your, horse and buggy days.

Did you go courting in a horse and buggy?

Knightstep - Yes I did.

Morrison - How did you meet your wife.

Knightstep - Just walked up and said hello. Met her at a supper we were having for a ball team. One time here in Leon and she was staying with her aunt and uncle. Or with another neighbor and my father and mother were going to my grandfather Knightstep's funeral and I was staying with a neighbor and he and I went to that supper that night and he introduced me to her. I'd met her before that just slightly. That's when it started and that's when I got in trouble.

Morrison - Did you court in a horse and buggy?

Knightstep - Yes.

Morrison - Where did she live?

Knightstep - About four mile from here - down on what they call Ten Mile.

Morrison - How long did it take to get there in a horse and buggy?

Knightstep - Oh, fifteen or twenty minutes. And I've walked it a many and a many a time. And then walk from her house we'd go from there five or six mile beyond there to church on Sunday night and back home and then I'd walk clear to Leon and then go out and work on the railroad for ten hours the next day.

Morrison - When did you start working on the railroad?

Knightstep - 1915.

Morrison - And how old were you?

Knightstep - Fifteen years old. Started on my birthday.

Morrison - What kind of work would a fifteen year old boy do?
What railroad was it?

Knightstep - Kanawha and Michigan, the K&M.

Morrison - What is it now?

Knightstep - In 1922 the New York Central taken it over and I worked for them up until 1965. I was 65 years old on the 30th day of March and on the first day of April I taken my pension.

Morrison - Well, let's go back. What did you do on the railroad when you were fifteen years old?

Knightstep - I first went to carrying water and that didn't last very long and I was doing the same as the other men were doing.

Morrison - And what was this?

Knightstep - Well, it was tamping ties and putting in ties and handling rail all that, stayed with the Maintenance of Way Department in that capacity until 1937 and I went to firing steam cranes then. Then from 1937 to '47 I was promoted to steam shovel engineer.

Morrison - From the time you started when you were fifteen years old until you retired. How had the railroads changed? How had their work changed?

Knightstep - Changed so much from manual labor to machine that it's very hard to explain just how its all changed. And the wages when I first started a dollar and ten cents for ten hours. And when I retired I was getting three dollars and eighty-five

cents an hour and working eight hours and time and a half for all over time. Sometimes I had to work twelve and sixteen hours. That was as much as they would allow me to work, sixteen hours.

Morrison - Okay, let's go back now where we left off when we got into your working, back to when you were courting and how you traveled. What did young people do then for entertainment? Go to church mostly or socials or what?

Knightstep - Church mostly, Sunday School Conventions, socials, or to church. There wasn't no picture shows. Once in a great while a showboat would come up Kanawha River and we'd all try to take our girls and go to the show.

Morrison - What about dances, did you have any dances?

Knightstep - Oh, once in a while there would be a party and we'd have a few dances.

Morrison - What kind of music would they have?

Knightstep - Oh, be somebody always play a fiddle and a banjo. Then till graphones came around and then we got some records to dance. But that wasn't near as much fun when we had someone playing the old fiddle and banjo.

Morrison - Have they always had passenger trains, do you remember?

Knightstep - Yeh, we had passenger trains up until - I just don't remember.

Morrison - Do you remember the first one, or did they have passenger trains when you grew up.

Knightstep - Yeh, we had passenger trains, used to have a

passenger train on the B&O that run into Ripley and Ravenswood. That lines been done away with years ago. And a few years back they taken them off and there wasn't any they used to run between Charleston and Columbus, Ohio and Toledo, Ohio, but they're all taken off.

Morrison - What about the first automobile? Can you remember your first automobile? Or someone in the community got one, could you tell me about that?

Knightstep - Yeah, the first automobile ever come into Leon, everybody was running and looking at it and wondering what made it move and --

Morrison - Whose was it - who did it belong to?

Knightstep - Belonged to Billy Flack.

Morrison - I guess he had a lot of money.

Knightstep - Yeah, he was an agent with the railroad company in Leon and he at that time I think it was an old open model Chevrol~~t~~. It didn't cost as much hardly as a wheelbarrow does today.

Morrison - Everybody came out to look at it?

Knightstep - Everybody came out to look at it and he taken everybody a ride in it. That wasn't afraid to get in with him. Cause he didn't know anything about it, everybody was afraid.

Morrison - What about the electricity? Do you remember, did you use lamps to study and read by?

Knightstep - Yes, kerosene lamps and kerosene lanterns, that's all the lights we had. Flashlights wasn't known of. Had old kerosene lamp and kerosene lantern.

Morrison - I was going to ask you about floods, because this area used to be so bad to have floods. What is the first flood that you remember?

Knightstep - Well, the first flood I was in after the thirteen flood, I remember the thirteen flood, but I wasn't in it. In 1918 we lived in what they call down town, down in the lowlands here at Leon and the water came up. We lived in a two story house and you could pull the boat up on the front porch and wade into on the first floor in to the stairs, with knee boots on and go upstairs. We moved everything upstairs. Lots of people had to move clear out of their houses and get up again the hillside and some in the school house and some in the church and then neighbors took people in that was flooded out and the water receded went down, was back down and out of the streets on Leon and then it started raining and the water started raising again and come up and that time we pulled the boat up on the porch roof and went in the upstairs window. And when it went down that time father bought property up on top of the hill and we moved up there and never - I had to work in the floods after that, ride the head end of a passenger train engine and shove logs and stuff off the railroad tracks between Leon and Point Pleasant and I was in several floods after that, but we didn't live in it, didn't have to move our household furniture and stuff out because we were on top of the hill then and Noah's Arc would have had to come along.

Morrison - What about toys when you were a child and Christmas? Could you tell me anything about it?

Knightstep - Well, what you got for Christmas, if you got a stick of red peppermint candy and an apple and orange and banana you thought you had the world. And as fer as toys were concerned you didn't have any toys.

Morrison - Do you remember your first toy? Or anything --

Knightstep - Us boys had learnt to make whistles out of paw-paw limbs. Had whistles and take an old Elder and punch the peth out of it and make a pop-gun out of it and chew up paper wads and put in there and shoot each other with them. Hollow the peth out of the center of them and make pop-guns out of them.

Morrison - I've heard that you used to be able to take a limb from a tree and find water. Could you tell me something about it?

Knightstep - I can still do that.

Morrison - Can you tell me a little bit about how that works?

Knightstep - You've got to have faith in it. You got to know and I can even take a peach tree limb or any fruit tree limb and locate a vein of water, tell you within two feet how deep it is and I can take an empty glass and set down right over that and take a gold band wedding ring and tie it on to a thread and hold it down in that glass and tell you which way the water flows. Direction the water flows. Which way the veins coming from East , West, North or South and which way it's a flowing to.

Morrison - Is this a secret way or do you care to tell about it?

Knightstep - It's a secret. I'm an old water witch, that's what I'm called.

Morrison - When you were growing up did you ever hear tell of people who were called healers? Do things like curing people by someways?

Knightstep - Yes, but I didn't believe too much in that.

Morrison - I don't mean just religious people. I mean other people who had ways of healing people. You know something like your way of finding water. Do you remember any people like that?

Knightstep - I've heard of them and people who could blow fire out of your flesh.

Morrison - Or cure thrush - what do you call that sore throat that babies used to get.

Knightstep - Thrush - My mother could do that.

Morrison - Do you remember how she could do it?

Knightstep - Yeh, she done it with sage leaves, and she never failed. People would come to her that they'd had their babies to doctors and they'd failed and they'd come to her to cure them and she never failed to cure them.

Morrison - And she used sage leaves.

What kind of things did you do on Halloween? For enjoyment when you were a young fellow?

Knightstep - Rolled rocks in the road and logs. Wasn't too many cars back then, just horses and wagons and buggies. People riding horseback and it wasn't too dangerous. Roll rocks and cut trees in the road. Take peoples' gates, take one gate and

take to another neighbors house, put it up and take his gate and take it to another neighbors house and do such things as that. Upset their outside toilets. We never destroyed nothing, we had a lot of fun. Sometimes we got caught and would have to put the stuff back. I remember one time we taken a man's buggy taken it down to the barn, some of us got on the barn, the rest stayed on the ground and taken the shaves out of it and took the wheels off of it and pulled it up on top of that barn and set it up. Just got it set up and just about finished with it. The fellow came out with a double barreled shot gun and said "whoopie do, whoopie do, boy's bring her down", and some of scrambled back down the ladder and on the ground and the rest taken the buggy down and handed it down to us with a rope and let her down. "Set her up", we set her up just like we got her out of the shed and after we got it set up he said, "whoopie do boys, whoopie do". He always said whoopie do whatever it was. If it was hand me the potatoes, it was whoopie do hand me the potatoes or biscuits. We taken his buggy back and put it in the shed and he had an old time hay bailer and it was setting down in the street below his barn so after he made us put the buggy away and went back to the house and we started off, one of the fellows said, "let's go back and get his old hay bailer", get even with him someday. We'll go back and get his old hay bailer and take it around to the depot and put it on the platform. Then the streets didn't have any black top or nothing just dirt roads. It had been raining

and the mud was about two and a half or three inches deep and we started down the street with that old hay bailer and everybody was pushing and pulling behind and in front and pushing on the sides and the way it happened, kind of a coincident the fellow that suggested we go back and get it, old hay bailer, and take it to the platform around to the railroad about a half a mile we had to take it. He slipped and fell and his leg went under the rear wheel of that hay bailer and broke his leg. That stopped our halloweening. We taken him home with a broken leg and he was the fellow that suggested we go back and get it. We deviled him about that for years.

Morrison - What about your school, could you tell me something about your school?

Knightstep - Oh, school was just like any country school. Had an awful good teacher sometimes and sometimes we had some awful bad ones.

Morrison - Which teacher impressed you more, that you can think about?

Knightstep - Mrs. Cora Woodall at that time, later became Mrs. Cora Sommers. There are three or four of us students of her's still call her Mrs. Cora.

Morrison - Now, wheredid she teach?

Knightstep - Here at Leon.

Morrison - Can you think of any incidents that happened at school?

Knightstep - Nothing only that they had to burn the school house down to get some of us out of the first grade.

Morrison - And how did they heat the schoolhouse?

Knightstep - With coal.

Morrison - Did you boys have to help with that?

Knightstep - We had a janitor to do that. Sometimes we'd have to go out in real cold weather, we'd run out of coal and one of us bigger boys would have to go out to the coal house and get her a couple buckets of coal to keep the fires going.

Morrison - Tell about the time the boy fell in the toilet hole?

Knightstep - One time when Mrs. Cora was teacher, the boys outside toilet was getting pretty delapidated and torn up like boys done during that time. Tore them up as much as they could. The whole seat and everything was tore off of this one, the upright, the front upright on it and all, just a two-by-four there and the boys would go in there and get up on it like a chicken on a roost. This one boy went out there and got up on there and slipped off, fell and went down in there and he was holding to the top of it. And an old gentleman by the name of McCollum lived right over from the school house a little piece. His yard come down right beside of the school-house lot. He heard this boy hollering and he come down there to see what was the matter. He hollered and ask him what was the matter and he said he fell in the hole. And he said what are you holding to and he said, "nothing". What are you

standing on and he said nothing and he said what are you holding to and he said the hole. And he came around and knocked on the door. Mrs. Cora went to the door and she came back and he told her who it was. And his brother was there in the room and him and I was about the same size and both about the biggest ones then in the school. They had to burn it down to get us out of the first grade. We went out and got him out and we taken him home. They lived about two mile from the schoolhouse and he taken him home. He come back the next morning and all the girls were holding their nose when they'd pass him. They said he cussed everybody on the school ground until Mrs. Cora caught him and when she caught him cursing I said, "she'd dry his trousers out pretty good with a hickory whith".

Morrison - Can you remember any of the school books you had during that time?

Knightstep - No, I expect I could find some of them around here somewhere. I don't know just where to look for them now. It was pass the old McGuffey reader, they'd went out before I'd went to school.

Morrison - What kind of games did you play at school?

Knightstep - Oh, we played things like snowball, some of us would choose sides. And I remember one time a boy hit me with a snowball, or ice ball. And when we went to playing again, I put a chunk of coal in a snowball and hit him right in the eye with it, blacked his eye too.

Morrison - What about some of the stores can you think of

some of the names of the things they had in the stores and tell me something about the country store?

Knightstep - Well, they had a general line of groceries and Arbuckle Brand Coffee, and Arbuckle Brand Sugar and then they would have farm, have horse collars, trames, traces, they'd have everything for the farmer too along with his groceries. They had all kind of patent medicines, people then used more patent medicines than home remedies. Go out and dig snake root and make snake root tea or blackberry root tea for different things. For the croup they generally used kerosene, or snuff mixed with hog lard, or quinine for pneumonia fever. They didn't have Vicks salve like they have today, methyloate, and stuff like that - they used that.

Morrison - Did your parents ever go out and dig any kinds of roots that you used for medicine? Or grandparents?

Knightstep - My grandparents did. My parents never did.

Morrison - Do youknow what kind of roots they used and what they used them for?

Knightstep - Yes, they knew about all the roots and things like that. We still have some people around Leon yet that believe in that old remedy. They go out and dig roots.

Morrison - Do youknow the names of any of them?

Knightstep - Yes, the Gensing, Snake root and the Indian Turnip, but it's so hot you just look at it and a blaze will come off of it.

Morrison - What would they use that for?

Knightstep - Oh, the Indians used that for different remedies. Mash it up and bound it on places, the old people did, same as this "Heat" we have today. They used that, Indian Turnips for that.

Morrison - They'd use it for rheumatism?

Knightstep - Use it for rheumatism and swollen joints and things like that.

Morrison - Have you heard of people planting under different signs and what about some -

Knightstep - Yes, indeed, and I believe in that one hundred percent. Neighbors and I have arguments over that. He claims there's nothing to it and I do. I always plant in the signs and reap in the signs when I kin. And then the moon the older the moon and you pick apples and dig potatoes there is less chance in them rotting than there is in new moon.

Morrison - Do you have different signs that you plant different things in?

Knightstep - Yes indeed.

Morrison - Could you tell me something about it?

Knightstep - I always liked to plant potatoes when the signs were in the head. And sometimes I get fooled in that, the potato takes after me and they're holler-headed. Then sometimes they're pretty solid. Corn and beans always like to plant my beans in sign of twins, double.

Morrison - You think you have more of a harvest when you plant then?

Knightstep - More of a harvest when I plant then. Corn, I believe in planting corn in sign of twins. Generally have two ears to the stock.

Morrison - What about when you make your sour-kraut?

Knightstep - Well, there's signs in making sourkraut. Make sourkraut when the signs are in the feet and I'll gurantee you you'll never eat a bite of it.

Morrison - What would be a good sign to make it under?

Knightstep - Anyplace from the neck down to the thighs.

Morrison - But in the signs of the feet, you couldn't eat it?

Knightstep - Signs of the feet you couldn't eat it. Two pairs of old dirty socks wouldn't smell as bad. Can't eat a bite of it.

Morrison - What~~are~~ are some of the other signs people believed in? Can you tell me about some of them?

Knightstep - Oh, people had different ideas of them. Some people believed in one sign and some people believed in~~another~~. Just like the bible some people believe some part of the bible and the other part they don't believe.

Morrison - What about it, is it the wooley worm you can tell the different signs of the winter?

Knightstep - That's not telling the different signs. That tells if it is going to be a severe winter or mild winter or the worst winter, if it's onthe head end of the wooley worm.

Morrison - If what's on the head end?

Knightstep - The black, most generally brown sometimes you'll find some buff colored one. My son-in-law not long ago brought in a right buff colored one and right down it's back from it's head to it's tail, straight down it's back was black. And he ask me what I had to say about that and I said I told him. Going to have a long winter, but it wasn't going to be too bad. Said he'd know I'd have some big tail to tell about it.

Morrison - You could tell that by the streak down it's back?

Knightstep - Yeah.

Morrison - How could you tell if it was going, would there be any other signs? Would it be marked differently?

Knightstep - Other than the mark so much back on it's head and the ~~body~~ would be black. That's the sign that the worst of the winter would be in the forepart.

Morrison - If it's real black in the front?

Knightstep - And if it's on the rear part of it, of it's body, the worst of the winter will be behind. Be mild if it's in the middle, won't be too bad of a winter. Since science went to fooling with the signs and the weather you can't tell what kind of weather you are going to get now. The signs just don't hold up.

Morrison - Can you think of any other things: that your grand-parents may have believed in or your parents?

Knightstep - Oh, I don't know the main thing was honesty. They all believed in that. The old people all did.

Morrison - What about the magic number of three, did they believe

that things happened in three's?

Knightstep - Never heard them talk much about that. Didn't pay attention to that I don't think. If they did they didn't express it too openly. (What did you do with my ash tray?)

Fellow go in a general merchandise store today or grocery store and ask for a horse collar or pair reins. or rein string.

Morrison - What's a rein string?

Knightstep - That's what fastens the rein around the collar. The horse is pulling a load or pulling a wagon and fasten the reins together. You had to have them fastened together at top and bottom and the rein string over the top of the horses neck and fastened the reins together. They were in the shape of, they, the reins were made to fit the collar. Used to have old wooden reins, horse pulled too hard or lunge would sometimes break the reins. They'd have to go get a new reins. Or ask for a double tree or single tree, they'd think you were crazy and call the sheriff today if you'd go in there. We still have some old time hardware around.

Morrison - What is the first country store you can remember going into as a child.

Knightstep - Well, I, one I remember most of was Rhodes - first store on Old Charleston Street and Patrick Street. Now it's West Washington and Market Street in Charleston. The next one was Tom Brammons. It was on up Charleston Street which is now West Washington Street. It was up more towards Virginia Street on up towards - up about half way to Elk Two Mile Bridge and Elk River.

Morrison - How long did you live in Charleston?

Knightstep - 1907 until 1913.

Morrison - Did you use - did you say something about your parents used to have a garden over on the island where Carbide now has a plant?

Knightstep - No, my parents didn't have it over there. Another man had a watermelon, raised watermelons and muskmellons over there and other stuff. Old man Evans.

Morrison - And this was over on the island where Carbide now has a chemical plant?

Knightstep - We lived then at that time they called it Dog Town, Lydia Robinson.

Morrison - You came to Mason County and worked on the railroad for awhile and then did you go back to Charleston?

Knightstep - I went back to Charleston and worked for the Charleston Street Car Company for about six months.

Morrison - And what year was this?

Knightstep - About 1918 and then came back to the Section in 1918. November 1st.

Morrison - How is it different today, how do you think that youth have it a lot easier? Do you think that discipline is as good as it was, is it handled better than it was when you grew up or do you think there isn't enough of it, or what?

Knightstep - There isn't enough discipline.

Morrison - What do you think about it?

Knightstep - Used to be the children minded their parents now the parents mind the children.

Morrison - Oh.

Knightstep - There's where it's at today. Called the generation gap. I got another name for it.

Morrison - What's that?

Knightstep - Just spared the rod and spoiled the child.

Morrison - Do you think we should go back to having more parental control?

Knightstep - Yes indeed I do. Today I got it right in my own family. I'm not going out the famile to hunt it. Little children five and six years old, their parents tell them to do something and I don't have to or I'm not going to do it. If I'd done it when I was a boy I wouldn't have been a/man today.

Morrison - Most parents give their children allowances today. How does this compare with what you had as a/child?

Knightstep - Well get somebody's cow to drive to the pasture fields, mow somebody's lawn, help clean up around and get a quarter or fifty cents, you'd think you were rich. You had to get out and get your own spending money.

Morrison - Would you usually run to the store like you do today and spend it?

Knightstep - No, no.

Morrison - Would you have a certain time to go to the store?

Knightstep - Had a certain time to go to the store. You didn't run to the store and another thing you didn't go to the store every time you wanted to cook a meal, the housewife didn't. You'd go to the old potato hole or apple hole out in the yard,

or down in the back cellar and get down in your old kraut jar and pickle bean jars, get you something to cook. Go out in the smokehouse and cut off a slab of bacon or back at the time no refrigeration, people would kill a beef and maybe hang a quarter up out under the smokehouse. Always had the smokehouse built with a projection out over the end of it. And they'd hang a quarter of beef up there and if they wanted a mess of beef they'd just go out and take a meat saw or butcher knife and hand axe, cut off a slab of beef and bring it in and cook it. And you never heard of anybody getting poisoned on it either.

Morrison - Why did they call them smoke houses?

Knightstep - Well the reason they called them smokehouses, the old farmers generally killed two or three hogs and a beef as I'd said. They'd salt that pork down in the smokehouse, they'd always have a big table in there and they'd salt it down and then let it lay so long, take it up and clean the salt off of it, put it up and hang it up in there and take an old tub or old iron kettle in there and build a fire in it and put kinkory wood and corn cobs in there and make a smoke and smoke them hams. And sometimes they'd smoke bacon, but most generally their bacon they'd salt pickle it put it down in brine and jars.

Morrison - And they used wood for this smoking?

Knightstep - Yes, they used wood.

Morrison - I noticed some pictures that you showed me of fish you had caught in the Kanawha River. Could you tell me something about that and about what time that was? What kind of

fish those were?

Knightstep - Oh, I might say fifteen, twenty back 1915 on up until they had so much pollution in the Kanawha River. I kept a trot-line in the river all the time. I worked on the Section and I'd get up in the morning daylight and go look my trot-line. Have a line stretched clear across the river from one side to the other. I've had as high as a hundred and fifty hooks on it. Tied on to what they called a trot line and it was short stagion weighted down with a big flat rock, tie one end of the trot-line to it and row out in the river, sometimes not maybe a third, maybe half way across the river dump that out of the back of your john boat into the river. And you start and run that line out and sometimes you'd pull that line, you'd have to stand up in the boat to keep from catching your hooks, and look and there'd be a fish on every hook, sturgeons, fish that didn't have no scales on them, they had a hard shell and they didn't have no bones in them, not even a backbone and you take and pour scalding water over them and just peel that shell off of there and take a pair of pinchers and take a hold of that backbone they called it, and pull it out and you could just slice it and you could slice the rib in each piece. Had no bones.

Morrison - And you don't remember the name of those?

Knightstep - They were the Sturgeon.

Morrison - Oh, they were the Sturgeon.

Knightstep - Then we had the white perch, and we had bass, and we had what we called the Skip Jack in the river here.

We still got a place down here we call Skip Jack Rock and that's where we got a lot of our bait for big fish. The biggest one that was caught around here a fellow by the name of Homer Smith died just a while back and he caught a seventy-six pound catfish. We'd catch catfish, blue cat, and mud cat and all kind of fish.

Morrison - Of course, you couldn't eat any fish today that you would catch out of Kanawha River.

Knightstep - No, you can't even stand the smell of them to clean them, let alone eat them.

Morrison - Did you ever go, what they called it, frogging?

Knightstep - Oh, yeah, I've caught as high as a hundred and twenty-five frogs in a night.

Morrison - Could you tell a little bit about frogging?

Knightstep - Yeah, we'd take a boat and there was generally always two of us and sometimes three or four of us and we'd go rowing along the bank, Have a good light and flash in there and there'd be a big frog setting on the bank. You'd back in right easy, lots of time you'd miss him, sometimes you'd catch him. I've watched for 'em.