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### Oral History Interview: Forrest Atkinson

Forrest C. Atkinson

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FA: My grandfather was born in, in Virginia in 1842, and my grandmother was just born in Virginia in about 1849 but later moved to Lawrence County, Kentucky. In 1904, my father came to Cabell County. My father, my grandfather, ah, on my mother's side, ah, Davey Easton, he came through, ah, Cabell County through Huntington in the year of 1900 and moved on to Logan. He, he drove a ox team all the way to Logan, and he got, ah, a job up 'ere as taking care of the horses and the ponies in the stables fer, fer a coal company; and, ah, he stayed there 50 years. He done right well. He raised a family of eight children, four girls and four boys. My dad, he was he was a farmer. When he came up here from Kentucky to Cabell County, he, ah, raised tobacco, and he was a timber cutter. He made ties, and he, he was pretty good in that respect. Ah, ah, most of the money crop then was tobacco. I can remember as a kid when the tobacco plants would be taller than me. I'd get out and pull them big worms off 'em and mash 'em in the ground; and pull the suckers off so the tobacco would grow, and we could get more money for it. In those days, ah, the tobacco was paid for in gold. I can remember my granddaddy bringing, my daddy bringing 'em big gold pieces home, \$20 pieces. There wasn't no paper money in circulation in our neighborhood then. They, people just didn't go for that paper stuff. I can remember plenty gold and silver dollars. Well, not plenty, because there wasn't, wasn't nothing very plentiful then. My mother, she, ah, raised a great big garden, and we canned everything we eat from sauerkraut to pickled beans and apple butter. And, then we'd hole up turnips and apples and then spring come and all that would be gone; next year we'd have to do it all over again. And, ah, I can remember, ah, of a funeral we had. My little baby brother died and the neighbors came in and made him a nice little coffin, ah, out of pine, and it was, ah, done up real good. And, we went up on the hill to bury him, and the preacher, why, he picked up a big handful of dirt and he said, "Ashes to ashes and dust to dust." And, we stayed there 'til the coffin, 'till the coffin was lowered in the ground and was all covered up and flowers laid on it. We didn't walk away like they do today, and people was real nice to us and helped us out a lot. And, then there was, ah, those big snows in the wintertime. Of course, being a kid, why, ah, they, they seem deeper than they do now; of course, we don't have no snows now like we did then. And, ah, the road that led up to our house was

a creek bottom. And, my dad got so disgusted with that that he give the State of West Virginia a five-acre tract of ground. Well, wasn't all for roads, but most of it was to put a road in there. Well, I was out there 50 years later, and they finally got a road through it so they're prospering out there now. Well, I don't know just, ah, oh yes, when I, when I was a little kid, I guess I was about nine years old, why, the neighbor that lived next door to us, his name was Mays, and, ah, he raised tobacco, too. So, he come over one day and had my brother and I to set out tobacco for him. Well, we thought we were going to get us about \$ .50 a piece, and he give us a dollar and a half. Well, that's what they paid grown people in them days. He said we done such a good job, that, ah, we was worth it. Well, in, in 1915, my daddy died and that just broke my heart, because we was such great pals. I can remember a lot of things my daddy used to tell me that held, that holds true today. He, ah, when we, when we moved out in that, ah, outskirts of town away from Huntington about 20 or 25 miles, why, he put in a telephone service out there for all the neighbors. I think there were about eight or ten out there then, and we had, ah, ah, line that we could talk to each other in case of emergency and so forth. And, later on in years, why, they put a switchboard in, and we could get Huntington if anybody cared to call. And, ah, like I said before, them, them days, ah, we raised everything but the salt and pepper. We even raised the seasons. We raised the seasons like sage, and, and mint, and all that stuff. Never knew what cheese was until I was 13 years old, I took me a bite of cheese. I thought it was soap and, ah.

DA: Tell us about getting to town, Dad. How long did it take you?

FA: Oh, well, we, ah, we, ah, had these barns, my granddaddy, my daddy put up two barns, and we had that full of tobacco and we'd strip this tobacco and bring it in just before Christmas and generally had two wagon loads and had to bring had, had to get us enough cash to run us through the year. And, that's, that's what my daddy, he bought, ah, every Christmas we could depend on a pair of shoes, and some socks, and things like that, underwear. One, one, one, one time they was taking it up over the mountain, and they had to go over two mountains to get into Huntington. They was taking it up over the mountain, and, ah, mother, she fainted. And, ah, it had been a raining and the roads was kind of slick , and it made her nervous

and she fainted. So they looked all over the place for water, and they couldn't find nothing on top of that hill and so when they got her to, they looked up on top of them wagons; and they was a great big puddle of water in it, held up there in the canvas and had water all the time. And, ah, well, ah, I, I never forget the time we come to Huntington. Ah, the streets was all dirt, wasn't no pavement. They was all dirt, even Third Avenue and, ah, very, very few sidewalks. Lots of horses, buggies, and wasn't no cars, never saw a car. They, they was a few in town they told me, but they had them in the barns, wasn't no garages then. They'd have them put up, keep the dirt and dust off of them, I reckon, and, ah, ah . . . stop.

DA: Dad, what kind of house did you live in?

FA: Well, we lived in a frame house. It was, ah, home built.

DA: What was it made out of, logs?

FA: Well, no, it was, ah, they had, ah, grove of poplar there, pretty good size poplar, so they cut that poplar down, and, ah, snaked it down to a mill. There was a mill at the bottom of the holler there, and they sawed it up and built the houses around there.

DA: Uh huh. What kind of roof did it have?

FA: It had, ah, wood shingle roof. The kind, you know, that you take a lathe and, ah, knock the, ah, cut a wood about 14, 14 inches long, and you just make wood shingles.

DA: Hmm. Have any plumbing in the house?

FA: No, wasn't no plumbing in those days.

DA: No plumbing. Oh, did this house have a loft? A lot of those houses had lofts.

FA: Oh, yeah, it had a loft all right. I can remember the, me and my oldest brother used to sleep up 'ere, and we had us a bed made out of shucks and every time you turned over, them shucks would just rattle.

DA: How did they heat the house, Dad?

FA: Oh, well, we used mostly wood, because we was going was clearing off ground all the time and mostly wood; but there was coal on the place, but we didn't use much of it.

DA: Uh huh. We, we were talking about the store. When you, when you got a chance to go to the store, ah, what did you like to shop for?

FA: Oh, it was, it was about a mile down from where we lived there was a little store. My dad, he owned it part of the time and another feller owned it. And, then, ah, ah, I think he owned it three times while we lived there. We lived there about eight or ten years, and he had it three times. It just passed from one to the other, one get tired and sell it to the other one. We, candy is the most I ever went to the store for. We didn't buy nothing to eat. We had our own bread and, ah, and everything else so we didn't have to buy nothing out of the store to eat.

DA: How, how about milk?

FA: Milk, we had our own.

DA: Did they sell milk in the store?

FA: No, they never sold milk then. We had cows, give the milk away. We never sold it. If anybody needed it, everybody had their own cattle.

DA: Oh, we, we were talking about going to town a while ago. How did you get to town?

FA: Oh, we went in wagons. They went in the wagons. Take, take us about, oh, 12-14 hours to make the trip one way. You'd have to stay over night.

DA: What were the wagons like?

FA: Well, they was just commercial wagons, ah, farm wagons. They, they held about a half a ton, I suppose, and, ah, they.

DA: Well, we have cars today, how about when your wagon broke down what, ah.

FA: Oh, well, you fixed, you fixed your own even, ah, everything about a wagon you fixed except if you bust a hub, you'd have to come into town to get a hub, and all the rest of it you fixed yourself. Shoe their own horses.

DA: Was there a blacksmith in the neighborhood?

FA: No, we, every man could shoe his own horse. He wasn't no farmer if he couldn't shoe his horse.

DA: Talking about the horses, what kind of horses did, what kind of a team did you have?

FA: We had regular farm horses, and then we had a team of mules. We'd use the mules mostly when, when he was pulling logs out.

DA: Pretty stubborn?

FA: Mules, oh yeah. Yeah.

DA: Uh huh. Well, ah, how much was a team, good team of horses worth then?

FA: Oh, I, I expect a good team of horses then brought a \$150.

DA: It would take a long while to pay for them wouldn't it?

FA: Oh, yeah. [DA: Save up for them.] Yes, uh huh.

DA: Let's talk about school, ah.

FA: Oh, schools. Oh, well, we had school. I, I went to school, and them teachers were really tough then, and I had anywhere from, ah, first grade to the eighth. I believe is as far as we went then.

DA: Have any one-room schools then?

FA: Any what?

DA: One room schools.

FA: Oh, well, it was all one room, man. If you went into the first grade, well, you got just as big an education as a guy in the

ninth grade. Time you got there, you already knew what he'd already learned.

DA: I wonder what the teachers went through then.

FA: Oh, boy (laughs), they went through plenty, but they was strict. We didn't have no trouble in schools.

DA: Okay, how about your mom and dad. Did they, ah.

FA: My, my, my people in them days, you know, they could read and write and, ah, presumably had a good education. My mother read every book that come her way, and my father, he was a, a good reader; and, and he was good with pen, he could write fairly well [DA: Uh huh.] and that was something in them days.

DA: Did you have a lot of books at home?

FA: Oh, yeah, yeah. Lots of books, and as the years progressed along, well, I guess we'd read about everything there was. At that time, there wasn't no television and, ah, Victrola was, ah, one, one of them kind, you know, that had a big horn on it [DA: Uh huh.] and records was round . . . and we didn't, we didn't go in for that very much. My daddy played a little somekind a little music on a music box and that was about it.

DA: Didn't they have square dances back in those days?

FA: Oh, to be frank with you, son, they didn't have square dances for years later. Now, when we come up there everybody come up there to work, and, ah, they had to work to live because, ah, everybody had a big family; and, ah, my mother, she, outside of doing all that cannin' and everything to hold us through the winter, she made all the clothes, and, ah, it was, it was, it was, ah, pretty hard job, you know, to get along in them days.

DA: Did she made all the clothes for the children?

FA: All the clothes for the children until they got up to go to going to into higher education, why, they wore store clothes then.

DA: Have any idea what a store-bought suit would cost then?

FA: Well, they had them anywhere, David, from 8, \$8 to \$20. I remember the last suit I remember my dad buying. It was, ah, so much guage, bluesurge; I don't know just what guage it was now. It really looked purty, and he paid \$20 for it.

DA: How, how did you have electric in the house then?

FA: Oh no, we, we burnt coal oil. They called it coal oil then, and, ah, used the lamps and lanterns for the barn and outside work.

DA: Where, where did you get this, ah, kerosene?

FA: Well, like I said, my dad sometimes he owned the store, and sometimes someone else owned it. It was about three different people. They kept a drum of kerosene down there, and we, we brought it up to the house in, I think, it was a two-gallon container.

DA: How much did it cost?

FA: Eight or nine cents.

DA: A gallon?

FA: A gallon, yeah.

DA: That's a little different, ah, than today isn't it?

FA: I should say so (laughs).

DA: Ah, you had lanterns for outside work?

FA: Yeah, the lanterns we used to feed the animals. Well, they did so sometimes they'd would do a little night huntin.' They used lanterns for that.

DA: Well, ah, what kind of lighting in the house, they had, ah, regular kerosene lamps?

FA: Yeah, regular kerosene lamps we had, ah, in the living room we had a bigger one, a larger one, and the other rooms, they



were smaller and you had to be very careful with them. If you let the wick go down too low, it's liable to get down in the kerosene and the whole thing blow up and burn the house down. So, you had to keep constantly watch of them and, ah.

DA: Didn't they smoke the house up?

FA: No, they didn't smoke too, we had pretty pure kerosene then; they didn't smoke too bad.

DA: Did they give out enough light, could you read and things like that?

FA: Oh, yeah, it was, ah, you, you'd have to get up close. You couldn't just get anywhere in the room, but you could read by them.

DA: Okay. Well, ah, talking about the house, how about your furniture. Did they made a lot of furniture then or did you buy it at the store?

FA: They, ah, bought most of the furniture then. The furniture people was coming along pretty good. Ah, they made some just, ah, maybe a chair or make a willow chair or something like that, but most of the furniture was boughten.

DA: Pretty sturdy, wasn't it?

FA: Oh, yeah, it was, it was, last and last.

DA: How about rugs and carpets? Did they have those then?

FA: Well . . . ones they used out in the country then was mostly homemade. They was braided, they made them, homemade just kind of a throw rug, you know, here and there.

DA: Well, did the women all get together, and, and I know they do that for quilts, they talk about that. How about rugs? Did they braid rugs, I mean, all the women would come in and make.

FA: Ah, they do that, and women would come in when we have apple peelin' to make apple butter and things like that. The women would all come in and help do that, and they'd go to house to neighbor to neighbor and do that, and if you've ever made

apple butter you know that's kind of a job.

DA: Well, how do you make apple butter?

FA: Well, they have to peel all these apples and put them in there, and you have to put them in this copper kettle, and you have to keep stirring. If you don't, it will stick. And, ah, they, ah, you cook them apples 'till the, the all the water's out of 'em, and then that makes a, it's better than sauce, because there ain't no moisture or nothin' hardly in it, and it's, it's real good.

DA: Now, can you put that up and keep it?

FA: Oh, yeah, we put it up in stone jars and seal it with sealing wax.

DA: Where do you store it?

FA: In the cellar. We had a cellar.

DA: Well, well, tell me about the cellar. What did you keep in the cellar?

FA: Well, we kept, ah, some vegetables and, ah, most all the canned goods and, ah, apples that we didn't put in the, hole in the ground. Well, we kept them out there and generally last until the first of the year. That way you wouldn't have to get nothin' out of the ground to eat on. These would last to about the first of the year.

DA: This cellar was it dug back, kind of back.

FA: Back in a hole in the back where the bank is.

DA: Nice and dark and cool.

FA: Oh, yes, it was, it was very I, I loved to get in there in the summertime when it was real hot. You could really cool off.

DA: Ah, did you keep milk there, too?

FA: Yeah, we kept our milk in there, butter.

DA: Oh, we were talking about being such a distance from town, ah, did that present a problem? I mean, did you get to go to town frequently or just once in a while?

FA: Well, we went to town, I think, ah, I lived out there ten years, and I think I went to town twice in those ten years. That was, that was a treat to go to town. It was just like going to Cincinnati now.

DA: Well, let's see, did you have newspapers? I suppose they had newspapers.

FA: Ah, we had the almanac, and, and, ah, ah, a farm paper, and then we got all the catalogs that was out then.

DA: Now, there wan't any radios or television, so how did news get around?

FA: Well, like I said in early statements, we my dad put that phone in and that's, we'd, ah, pick it up from neighbor to neighbor, someone in the community, why, there would be one going to town maybe once a week; and they could bring the news back.

DA: In other words, news was pretty, ah, slow in circulating.

FA: Yeah.

DA: Well, dad, what did you do around the house? Did you have duties and chores?

FA: Oh, yes, I had to, I had to bring the stove wood in and keep the wood in the wood box for the fireplace. We burnt wood in it.

DA: What kind of wood did you burn? Just any kind? Pine?

FA: No, it was hickory or white oak or something like that . . . mostly the kind that wouldn't pop out, you know, and get on to the floor.

DA: You didn't use much coal then, did you?

FA: No, we didn't. There was plenty coal there but we didn't use

very much of it.

DA: Talking about your chores around the house, what, what, ah, did you have specific chores to help?

FA: Oh, yeah, on washday I remember I helped my mom with the carrying the washwater. We, we got the water then out of, ah, small running stream all the time. It was soft water.

DA: What kind of soap did they have then?

FA: Ah, lye soap mostly. They kind of made it theirselves. They made it out when they killed hogs when they took all the, the entails and things like that and, and made soap out of it.

DA: Was that, ah, good soap?

FA: Oh, yeah, that was the best there was to wash your clothes with.

DA: A little rough on the skin?

FA: Oh, yeah, it was, ah, we had (inaudible) soap for the face.

DA: Was the drinking water, did, did that come from the stream then?

FA: We had, we had a spring that, ah, we got our drinking water from. It was good, too. Cold all the time.

DA: Of course, they didn't have drilled wells, I don't guess.

FA: Oh, no, really didn't have everything else you got today either. We, everything was clean out there. You could drink right out of the creek.

DA: Well, ah, because you had small brothers and sisters, ah, wasn't that a real problem for your mother when she was working around the house?

FA: No, we always tried to take care of each other. We done a pretty good job at it.

DA: We were talking a little while ago about, ah, soap, you

mentioned hogs. Did you raise a lot of hogs?

FA: Oh, yeah, we kept anywhere from five to six hogs and, ah, killed them and put them in the smokehouse, and I can remember gettin', ah, hickory to smoke them with, and we had to smoke them all day. First, you, after you kill them, you'd let them kill out and then you'd take can cut them out and lay 'em down and put a lot of salt on 'em, leave that salt on 'em for a while 'till they say they "take salt" which they take then after that you brush the salt off, put pepper and a little honey on 'em and, ah, hang 'em up and smoke 'em [DA: You talk about smoking.], ham, shoulders, and bacon. We eat all the rest, frest meat.

DA: Talking about smoking and how did you, what's the procedure for that?

FA: Well, ah, it was, ah, it was, ah, kind of a long job. We put 'em in, ah, in, ah, in a room where there wasn't no windows or kept closed, closed the door, and you just burnt this, ah, hickory, green hickory wood and that put a real good smoke on 'em. Wasn't nothing would get on 'em after that.

DA: Then, then you didn't, you didn't can any?

FA: No, we didn't can.

DA: You didnt can much pork at all. We were talking about the farms a while ago, were the farms, did you have small gardens or a lot of ground?

FA: Oh, no, the farms out there then at that time were pretty good size.

DA: It was large.

FA: Large, they've been cut up since then, but at that time, they was pretty large.

DA: Well, I'm sensing it would be quite a job then.

FA: Yeah, well, we tried to keep, ah, where we had the cattle, ah, we tried to keep that all fenced off all the time.

DA: You used barbed wire then?

FA: Barbed wire, yes, uh huh, put up about three strands.

DA: Did everybody fence their farms in?

FA: Everybody that had cattle did. They fenced the part they's running the cattle on. That a way they didn't get out and get in the corn, the wheat, and oats. We raised all that stuff then and, ah, get out there and go in it.

DA: Something I'm curious, was there any sheep?

FA: No, sheep, no.

DA: No sheep.

FA: No sheep.

DA: Was there a reason for that not to have sheep?

FA: Ah, well, ah, yeah, there was a reason for it, because we just didn't have time. Then, they said the hoofs tore the ground up [DA: Uh huh.]. And, we had geese, and I remember picking them geese and taking them goose feather my mother did and making pillows out of them and feather beds.

DA: I bet they were nice.

FA: Yeah, they was good eatin', too (laughter).

DA: Dad, let's talk about what other animals did you have on the farm?

FA: Oh, I remember that bull we had. He was a great big red, white faced and, and to, to me I was really scared of him.

DA: Was he mean?

FA: Oh, yeah, he was, he was pretty mean. At least, I thought he was. I remember going down the to let him out to water, and ah, I'd, ah, open the door and then I'd get behind the door, and he'd run out and before you could turn around I'd come back in the building and close the door behind him. He'd

wander off and get him a drink, and, ah, we just had to do this only in the wintertime. In the summertime, we let him run out and in all the time. In the wintertime, well, we kept him up and that made him that much more meaner, and, ah, I, ah, I after he got his drink, he'd wander back in, and I'd throw his hay down to him and sneak down and, ah, close the door again. Come down on the outside where they threw the hay up, and I'd close the door. Now as far as him being dangerous, I wouldn't know; I was just scared of him.

DA: Well, did most of the people, farmers keep bulls or?

FA: No, there was very few bulls kept around there. My dad finally got rid of this one. He knew us kids were scared of him so he finally traded him off or sold him. I forget which.

DA: Well, ah, we, we were talking about the roads. Can you remember the first car that you ah . . .

FA: Yeah, that just seems as though it was yesterday that was over quite a while, over fifty years ago. I remember that car; it come out and my brother and I was, ah, raised a little patch of mushmellons, and we had them pretty good size about half as big as a punkin'. They was pretty good size. You know what a mushmellon is, and this guy drove up in this car and, ah, wanted to know how much they was. Well, I asked my dad how much to get for 'em, and he said, "Oh, about a dime." And, I got this great big one, you know, and I said, "A quarter." Well, I knew then that I was going to be a salesman 'cause I got a quarter out of a punkin', mushmellon. We, we, we, we wouldn't eat them hardly because they said it was crossed with a punkin' 'cause they grow so big  
[DA: Uh huh.] And, when that car backed up and turned around and headed back to town, I could smell that gasoline on that road, and I, I believe that gasoline stayed on there all evening just the, just the smell of it. And, That was the first car I seen, and the make of it, I, I really don't know, but I think it was a Maxwell.

DA: Well, ah, did the people, I've seen a lot of pictures of early cars and drivers, did they dress, you know, in goggles and all that?

FA: Oh, he had on a big white coat in his open touring car and, ah, goggles. Yeah, he was well fixed and the woman with him, why, she was dressed up, too.

DA: Well, ah, pretty dusty?

FA: Oh, it was dusty. That dust didn't settle for quite a while after he left there.

DA: Well, ah, were the roads, were the roads, what were the roads like, I mean, to drive a car on? Was it rough or.

FA: Well, ah, in, in, ah, the summertime, they run the grater over it, and they was kind of smooth in the summertime. But, in the wintertime when the wagons all run over them, why, they'd get a big rut in them. You'd get in that rut, you'd have to, have to stay in it until you got where you was going, and then it was hard trying to pull out of them sometimes. And, that's what you call getting in a rut.

DA: Well, talking, talking about the roads, who worked on the roads? Did they have, they didn't have graters then did they?

FA: Oh Lord, I don't know who it was, Dave. I really don't know. I think they used, ah, what you called, ah, shovels. Then, they'd go along with those shovels and cut it down it a little bit /DA: Uh huh./.

DA: Ah, Dad, we was talking about, talking about, talking about making clothes a little while ago, ah, I'm just wondering in washing clothes, how did you iron the clothes?

FA: Oh, well, they had the iron then was all made in one piece. Handle and all, and, ah, you put it on the stove and got it hot and then you got you a rag and got a hold of the handle and, ah, iron. Later on I can remember when they got the little snap on-handles where you heat your iron and then you just reached, snapped that handle on that way your handle wouldn't get so hot.

DA: That was a real job then iron clothes.

FA: Oh, I guess it was, yes.



DA: It would take all day?

FA: Well, it did for us, because we had a big family /DA: Uh huh./.  
All day to wash 'em and all day to iron 'em. Sometimes it  
would take two days to dry 'em if you had rain.

DA: Your mother really took care of the garden. Was that her, her  
chore to take care of the garden?

FA: Well, ah, my dad done, he run the double shovel through it  
and plowed it and all like that, but Mom just, just, ah,  
gathered the stuff. She didn't, she didn't really garden  
/DA: Uh huh./ She canned it and gathered it and all that  
stuff.

DA: Well, ah, too, I'm wondering like what like coffee.

FA: Oh, well, we used that Arbuckle Coffee then and used that,  
because it had a coupon on it and, ah, and, ah, coffee always.

DA: Was it ground coffee?

FA: No, no, we had a coffee mill. We'd get that and grind it and  
really ground that coffee up. Early of a morning she'd get  
up and grind that coffee. You could smell it all over the  
house it . . . more coffee smell than there is now.

DA: Did people drink more coffee than tea?

FA: Ah, no, they, they went very light on coffee, Dave. We didn't  
even drink, ah, coffe, ah, I was way up in the teens before  
I drank any coffee.

DA: Well, did people drink tea?

FA: No, it was milk.

DA: Milk. Well, Dad, we was talkin' about, about the farm, garden  
and everything. Did you have a orchard or anything like that?

FA: Oh, yes, we had quite a few fruit trees. Of course, my dad,  
he set some out first went on the place. There was some  
there, some old ones, and I think them things was just  
started, ah, barin', ah, it takes about seven or eight years

I think from start to barin', and they started barin' fruit. I can remember my mother used to get them apples, and dry 'em, and sulfur them, and can them, and everything else. They kept some raw through the winter.

DA: How did you store 'em?

FA: We put most of them in the ground in straw and, ah, a few we put in the cellar, and they last for about Christmas, I think I told you before.

DA: Well, ah, what's a sulfur apple?

FA: Well, the reason you put sulfur on the apple when you cut it and put it up on the roof, and you core it, and put it up on the roof to dry, and the reason they put sulfur on it was to keep the flies off of it; and they have got a different taste than regular dried apple.

DA: Well, how did you dry an apple?

FA: Same, same procedure. Just cut it, and then put it up on the roof . . .

DA: And, they keep for a while?

FA: Oh, yeah, yeah. But, if you dried 'em, you had to keep flies off them . . . Way up there was, ah, pawpaws, and, ah, persimmons, and, ah, blackberries up around that coal bank or coal mine whatever you want to call it. There was blackberries up there was big as your thumb, and, ah, and we'd gather hickory nuts and walnuts. There were quite a few walnuts on the place, and, ah, we'd gather them and in the winter, we'd have taffy pullin', popcorn, and stuff like that.

DA: Did you grow the popcorn?

FA: Oh, yeah, we grew it, grew the popcorn.

DA: A special kind of corn?

FA: Yeah (inaudible), the kind they raised, they bought their seed out of Virginia (inaudible). In fact, a lot of their seed, they just kept from one time to another (inaudible).

## Side Two

FA: After my father died, I went to Virginia to live with my kinfolks. Ah, they attended school there in a two-room school house. I had to walk four miles to school, and there one of the ladies there, there was four ladies and, ah, two girls. No, I guess three, two girls and my grandmother. I called her grandmother, but she wasn't. Ah, we, ah, one of these girls taught school for the Indians in Oklahoma. In 1912, when they opened the territory up, why, she had to come back to Virginia. She was, ah, very nice teacher. She taught me at home a lot when the snow got so deep I couldn't go to school. As I said, the school was four miles away, and sometimes you couldn't just walk out there. You know, expecially a kid. We could take a horse, but it wasn't no convenience to take a horse. You'd have to tie him up and leave him there all day without anything to eat, snow on the ground, so we just stayed at home, and she taught us there. It was, ah, it was, ah, nice, ah, we had a nice deep snows at that time of the year and, ah, especially right after Christmas. And, in the summertime, in the spring, why, ah, had, ah, a lot of duties to do. I had a lot of things to do. I had to take care of the cows. I had to go get them sometimes they was four or five miles away seemingly, seemingly was that far. The place was 640 acres and seemed like them cows wanted to roam all over. They'd give up farming, because the government hadn't ever done nothing about the slaves, and they was living there on the place. And, ah, she would, ah, send them food and let them raise a garden, things like that, but she couldn't she couldn't, ah, work 'em, because the government hadn't made no arrangements for it yet. Lord, I don't know what ever become of the colored people, though, I should say black people. Ah, in 19 . . .

DA: Ah, now, was there a lot of difference in life in, ah, Virginia and West Virginia back then?

FA: Oh, yes, but you see I was just a small boy, and I had the free roam. I could roam all over the place. And, we had one pretty fast horse, and I would get him down on that bottom ground; and I would really turn him lose, and he could fly. And, ah, ah, I'd catch, ah, in the rabbit season, why, I, I had four or five, ah, boxes of traps, and I'd catch them

rabbits. I'd take them into, ah, Bedford and sell them for \$ .25 a piece and, ah.

DA: (Laughs) Is that alive or dressed?

FA: No, I'd have to dress them. Ah, didn't, didn't skin 'em. I just, ah, take (inaudible). Had to leave the head and feet and everything on so they would know it was a rabbit. And, then, ah, then I raised, ah, chickens. One year grandma said I could have all the chickens that a certain hen had for me to clip the, the toes of up, up to about the thumb is, you know, just clip the toes off a little bit there, so I could tell them apart. And, ah, come a frost that, ah, early spring and (inaudible) I had all kinds of chickens. I didn't know which was mine and which was hers, and I just sold chickens right and left. I got quarter a piece for them, nice big fryers. And, ah, one of the daughters then finally she married a banker in Bedford County, and she went there to live. She had, ah, two little girls. And, then, ah, one of the, one, ah, a gentlemen of the house come home, why, we'd got squirrel huntin', and we'd, ah, got fishin', and swimmin'. They had a big cave out there. We'd explore it. I think he got about as much kick out of it as I did, and he was a grown man. And, ah, the other body, he was, ah, he was, ah, already went through law school, and he was a lawyer. He went to Oklahoma City studied law in Oklahoma City. And, ah, ah, the other girl, her name was Lenordine, and, ah, she was getting ready to get married when I left. I come home on a visit and never went back.

DA: Did you like it in Virginia?

FA: Oh, oh it was a swell place to live. People out there was different, churches was different.

DA: What kind of church did you go to?

FA: Episcopalian. We, oh, that was about all we, I believe there was a Baptist Church around (inaudible).

DA: (Inaudible)

FA: No, no, in Virginia, though, that was the main parish.

- DA: You want to tell me a little bit about the activities in Virginia then. I mean, did you have, ah, was it like in West Virginia, lumbering . . .
- FA: No, wasn't no lumbering, coal mining, or anything like that. In this section of the country, it was mostly farming.
- DA: What kind of farming did they do down there?
- FA: Well, I told you a while ago that they, they decided to raise in them bottoms there to raise that wheat on, ah, slaves worked on that side. They just, just cut it off and didn't do nothing. But, on the other side they had a white tenant, and he had some girls up there, and he raised, oh, I'd say 34 acres of corn and some wheat. They had a mill right down below us there that they ground the flour and the corn.
- DA: Did you have to pay so much a bushel or?
- FA: No, they grind it on consignment, ah, kept so much for grinding.
- DA: What, what kind of dwellings did they have down there. Were the dwellings different?
- FA: Well, ah, they were plantation houses. They had, ah, ah, kind of a square brick, and it had a place for a big long dining room, and then a kitchen in back of it, and then on the side, it had built for maids, for colored maids.
- DA: Well, tell me, did you have plumbing?
- FA: No plumbing, no.
- DA: No plumbing down there either.
- FA: No, not at that time.
- DA: Well, ah, you know, about that time the, ah, about that period was there any resentment about the Civil War?
- FA: Why sure there was resentment. There's, there's, ah, all these people 25 or 30 colored people living on the place, and the government wouldn't no nothing about them, and, ah, the lady, she, ah, tried to take care of'em as best as she could. She

was old then, and, ah, she didn't know what actually what to do with them. They wouldn't tell her what to do. If they told her to go ahead and raise wheat or something like that, she would have done it. They had the combines and everything, but they was laying, setting in the barn a rusting.

DA: Kind of rough on the people.

FA: Sure it was rough on the people. Now, as far as this, ah, her being, ah, treating the colored people, she treated them a lot, a lot better than the government did.

DA: Well, ah, thing about taxes then, land like that, was taxes pretty high back then?

FA: Taxes was high in Virginia.

DA: You think they were higher down there than they would be up here?

FA: I believe they would.

DA: Can you tell me about a typical day for me??

FA: Well, ah.

DA: Just tell me what you did, you know, when you'd get up in the morning. I know it's different.

FA: Well, ah, I get up in the morning. I didn't have nothing to do with the hogs, ah, the, the white tenant took care of them. We had about eight or ten hogs all the time. We'd get about six and kill them, get us an old sow and raise some more. And, I guess they give them colored people a lot of mean to eat, because, ah, we never ate that much pork. They smoked it the same as they do here. They take it to the smokehouse, salt it down, and, ah, then, ah, my, my job was to go get them cows. In, in the summertime, I'd go out there and they'd be, the dew would be so cold. I'd find them cows up on the hill (inaudible). I'd find them up on the hill, and I, one of 'em, two of 'em be laying down, and I'd get them up right quick; and I'd put my feet in there where they'd been a laying to get my feet warm again. I tried to ride one off the hill, but she wouldn't let me ride it. And, then the lady give me

a calf. Well, I was supposed to have the next calf. Well, I left out there, and that was the end of that.

DA: You didn't get the calf?

FA: Never got the calf.

DA: Well, talking about the day, well, ah, was there hunting much down there?

FA: Yeah, we went hunting when the boys come in, why, ah, they, they like to hunt. The one out at Oklahoma, the other'n he, he, he worked for Armour and Company. He was a big meat man. I guess he still is, is still with them down there. I think, ah, last time I heard he was supposed to be down in Texas, and, ah, we'd go huntin'. That, that man really enjoyed huntin'. Whether he got anything or not, he just liked to get out and walk in them hills.

DA: Do a lot of bird hunting down there?

FA: Oh, yes. There's bird hunting, and then, ah, we didn't do no night hunting. Although they done it, we didn't.

DA: Quail?

FA: Quail was the main thing. A sportsman like him would shoot quail.

DA: Well, I've, I've seen a lot of pictures taken, you know, take a buddy out, a dog. Is that the way they . . .

FA: Well, we, we never took, ah, never took a buddy, because we wasn't going to get that many birds. They just shoot about a half a dozen birds and that, that would be enough for a meal and that would be all we'd kill at one time. I remember when I, when I first went out there in the spring, I went up, up in the (inaudible) there, and I found about 17 or 18 quail. Oh, they's just little tiny things, the prettiest things you ever saw, so I brought them down to the house. And, ah, they let me keep them there for a while. Then she finally said, well, they was wild. I better take them back and let the mothers take care of them, and I took them back up. I hated to part with them. They was cute little fellers [DA: Yeah.].

DA: Well, when you was living in Virginia were there any towns nearby?

FA: Yes, there was Bedford. It was, ah, about a four-hour drive from where we was from the town, and we'd got in there and get all the supplies that we would have to have. And, ah, then there was her daughter, daughter lived there in town, and we'd go around and see her and the children.

DA: They still have buggies then?

FA: Oh, yes, there was lot of buggies then. Wasn't no cars. I think, I think the first car was, ah, bought out there. I think a preacher bought it, and I think it was a Page.

DA: Page?

FA: Yeah, I think, ah, that was the first car I can remember out there, but later one, why, people bought Fords.

DA: Well, how were the roads in Virginia? Were they similar to West Virginia or?

FA: Well, the roads out there was a little better than West Virginia at that time. Ah, they, they had a little more work done to them made it better.

DA: Do you have pretty good memories of Virginia?

FA: Oh, well, for a ten-year-old boy I have, I'd say, ah, I can remember a few things. Ah, I can remember about the times we'd go to town about, ah, ah, right below that mill there you would see all these big cranes, big birds, in the creek and fish, they was fishing.

DA: You like to fish then?

FA: Oh, yes, yes.

DA: What kind of fish did they have?

FA: Oh, just the run of the mill. Just about like we have here.

DA: Fished in the same way?



FA: Yeah.

DA: You was telling me one time about (inaudible).

FA: No, no that was here in West Virginia. Now, we, we'd go there to Bedford to do some of our shoppin' and the other time we went to a town over on, on James River. I remember the first time I saw James River. I thought it was the ocean. It's really wide there, and, ah, that took a little longer to go over there. We didn't go over there quite so often. Had to get in, in horse and buggy at that time. Well, then in 1917, why, she bought a Ford, and, ah, took her about, I guess, six weeks to learn how to drive it just right. Ah, she, ah, would run it all over the place there. Finally, got so she could hold it in the road, and, ah, she had a pretty good time with it.

DA: Did they have driver's test then?

FA: No drivers test, no. No license or nothin'. You just got, got in it and went.

DA: Well, you know how gas prices have risen. Talking about fuel prices and everything, now, how, how much was gas back in those days?

FA: Oh, I judge it was around \$ .30. Ain't much, wasn't much, it wasn't, never did get much cheaper than that.

DA: (Inaudible)

FA: I come back to Huntington and, ah, finished school, and, ah, I got a job or two. Didn't amount to much, so I joined the Army, and I went to Ft. Sam Houston, Texas. I was in the light artillery, and I got, ah, worked my way up. All them 'old duds down there they'd been there since the war was over, and they and there they sit. I think one or two of 'em was a first private, and so I worked my way up to, to, ah, corporal right quick. Got that extra money, and when I went out on the range, why, I made expert gunner; and that paid \$5 a month more, and I was on my way to be a sargent and, ah, come to find out that was going to be, I was going to be a sargent when I took on another three years. So, I never said I would or wouldn't. But, when I got that discharge papers, buddy, I left there in

a hurry (laughter). I had enough of Texas. I didn't go back for 40 years. I went back a couple of years ago down there. Well, that, ah, out there where we used to train, ah, ah, done made a big, ah, resort out of it and flooded it all with water and, ah, everything is kind of changed around there a little bit. And, over there where the city was at San Antonio, why, that, that thing is four or five times bigger than it was then and still workin' on it. They're cut, carving it out of solid rock, a wall around that thing.

DA: Everything's big in Texas.

FA: Everything's big in Texas, and it is there. They have the biggest dam place down there I ever saw. And, ah, after I got out of the Army and come back here, why, I got me a job driving a truck had a haul from Columbus hauling ice cream back and another'n going to Dayton and from Dayton right on down to Cincinnati and hauling a load of meat back. Well, you done that about three times a week is about all you could make it. And, ah, I got \$20 a week for that. That, that was big money then.

DA: Was that union pay?

FA: (Laughs) That's all the pay you got, union or not. I don't know. And, ah, the manager was real nice, though, and about all he could say was, ah, making that load for \$50, and I was burning, burning up about \$30 worth of gas, I think. Oh, my.

DA: Ah, when did you quit that, and where did you go then? You tell me you went to Michigan . . .

FA: Oh, yeah, I went to Detroit. Got me a job up there at Henry Ford's. The latter part of 1928. He was going to start in on the A Model. Oh, he done made a few there in the late 28's, but he was going to go in it in a big way. He done bought all the battleships up and, ah, was cutting them up and was going to make Fords out of them, and, buddy, he did, too. Ah, I was up 'ere when President Hoover come through, and he come through the plant, and we had to wear a white shirt. Well, a few of us Democrats didn't think too much of that. Of course, I, my people was all Republicans 'till the Depression, some of us changed to Democrats, and some, ah, just didn't vote at all. But, ah, I, I believe in making a stand somewhere. I'm, I'm

more for or less for the man. Anymore sometimes them Republicans, some of them Republicans pretty nice people. I married one. Well, guess, ah. Well, I come, I come back to Huntington and got me a job here in a local factory and retired with a fairly good pension. And, that's something new, because, ah, when, when I was starvin' to death there to start out with, I didn't think I'd ever draw a pension. Of course, the social security and the pension I got helps out right well. I'm doin' right well with it. In my time, speaking of changes in my time, I think everything that ever was, I was born the year the airplane the first airplane flew. From then on it's been all kind of changes. I've, I've seen, ah, man walk on the moon with a television. Look in that screen and see that man plain as day right there on the moon. And, I've seen, ah, wars, I've gone through four wars. I've seen the Army mechanized, and, ah, they've got things they didn't even use in the last war that would really tear the countries all to peices. And, that's not countin' the big bomb. They've got it, too, and I think if the people won't settle down and get back to God they're just going to blow each other up. Ah, they ain't no sense in carryin' on the way some of them do everywhere, everything, and every country is out for money and how, how it can do the other man in. And, they're just going to have to get more brotherly love in their actions here and overseas, too. Ah, I think this country's gone far enough. I think we've just about give all we can give, and I think that someone else ought to commence to, ah, look out for theirselves over there instead of having to depend on us so much. And, ah, since I've retired, I've had a chance to look back on things. Oh, yes, I could have done better on lots of things if I'd, if I'd a done it. I'm, I'm glad of the life I've lived. I've been a Christian now for over 25 years and, ah, when I, when I die I'm going to Heaven.

DA: Well, talking about (cut off). Well, Dad, you know when we started this tape that, ah, before I ever (inaudible) it that this is to be cataloged at Marshall University and, ah, for future study, Appalachian culture. Since you've grown up, ah, in Appalachia your grandparents and your great-grandparents, ah, what, what is your feelings on the future of Appalachian culture for the young people in the University today?

FA: Well, I think it should be taught. I think our people have come a long ways and, ah, ah, buildin' and (inaudible). We,

ah, have a lot of good ideas, and, ah, we live close to the earth. I think that, ah, we should be, should be studied. My, ah, I didn't know that I was bein' taped for a university or anything or I might have, ah, read up on, ah, little more. I mean, I might have studied it a little more, ah, thought about it, ah, but I didn't. Just, just, ah, just started talkin' and this is the way came, came out.

DA: Well, Dad, thank you very much.