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### Oral History Interview: V. L. Martin

V. L. Martin

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## SIDE ONE

- ① PERSON BEING INTERVIEWED WAS MR. V. L. MARTIN
- ② AGE - 74, BORN - 1897
- ③ CURRENT ADDRESS - MT. HOPE, W. VA.
- ④ RAISED ON NORTH SAND BRANCH IN RALEIGH COUNTY
- ⑤ WAS 16 YEARS OLD WHEN HE GOT OUT ON HIS OWN, ALWAYS LIVED A GOOD CLEAN LIFE
- ⑥ ALWAYS A VERY RELIGIOUS
- ⑦ WAS A SCOUT MASTER AT THE TIME OF WORLD WAR II
- ⑧ SCHOOLS WHERE HE WENT WAS ABOUT A MILE AWAY FROM WHERE HE LIVED, FINISHED THE EIGHTH GRADE
- ⑨ FIRST JOB WAS HAULING FREIGHT
- ⑩ LATER ON IN LIFE WENT TO FAX HIGH SCHOOL TO OBTAIN A NUMBER THREE TEACHERS CERTIFICATE,
- ⑪ WENT INTO OFFICE WORK AT WEIRWOODS
- ⑫ DID SUBSTITUTE TEACHING SOMETIMES

- ⑬ HAD FIVE UNITED STATES PATENTS
- ⑭ HE IS OF THE METHODIST DENOMINATION. TAUGHT SUNDAY SCHOOL
- ⑮ IN 1925 BEGAN WORKING FOR THE NEW RIVER COAL COMPANY
- ⑯ HAD SIX CHILDREN
- ⑰ IN 1940 BECAME INVOLVED IN POLITICS. WAS INVOLVED IN A VERY CONTROVERSIAL TRIAL IN HOGAN COUNTY
- ⑱ HAS ALWAYS BEEN A DEMOCRATIC
- ⑲ MAKE COMMENTS ABOUT NIXON
- ⑳ TELLS OF INCIDENT IN SEPTEMBER, 1944 HIS SON OF THE MAN HE WAS TALKING ABOUT IS BOB BOLEN, MANAGER OF THE YMCA IN BECKLEY, W. VA.
- ㉑ NEVER WAS ACTUALLY IN THE ARMED SERVICE

## SIDE TWO

22. TELLS OF A CONVERSATION WITH A MINISTER CHAPERTON.
23. SEPT., 1918 - WAS DEFFERED FROM GOING INTO THE ARMED SERVICES
24. GIVES IDEAS ABOUT GOD AND OUR NATION.
25. TELLS OF INCIDENT IN GETTYSBURG BETWEEN CHURCHILL AND EISENHOWER
26. GIVES IDEAS ABOUT CERTAIN PRESIDENTS, SAYS THAT FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT WAS THE GREATEST PRESIDENT DURING HIS LIFETIME.
27. SAYS ONLY ONE OF HIS THREE SONS WENT INTO THE WAR. THAT WAS HIS SON BOB
28. IN 1923, FIRST CAME TO MOUNT HOPE
29. TELLS ABOUT NEW RIVER COMPANY IN THE OLD DAYS
30. TELLS ABOUT HIS SON BOB, WHO NOW WORKS FOR NORTH AMERICA

AVIATION

(31) TELLS ABOUT HIS SCOUTING  
EXPERIENCE

NAMES MENTIONED:

A - MARVIN POWLER

B - BOB MARTIN

C - BILL MARTIN

d - EDGAR MARTIN

E - MR. CLAPERTON



ORAL HISTORY

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is gained from me or my assigns.

Date July 8, 1974

V. L. Martin  
(Signature - Interviewee)

Forest Hills Rd.  
Address

1111 4th St., W. Va. 25701

Date July 8, 1974

Frank W. Bingham, Jr.  
(Signature - Witness)



An Interview With

Mr. V. L. Martin

Conducted by

Bill Bergendahl

July 8, 1974

VM: Ah, I'm V. L. Martin. Ah, I was born in 1897. I'm 77 years old, and I, ah, was raised, my mother died when I was 18 months old, and my grandparents took me to raise; and they raised me on the farm on North Sand Bank in Raliegh County, and I lived on that farm until I was 16 years old. Then at 16 years old, my grandfather came to me, and he said, ah, "Your grandmother has passed away and just you and I are here, and I've got to go get me a job. And," said, "I'm going, leaving this Sunday, Sunday afternoon," Sunday at noon when it was. And, he said, ah, "You've just got to get out, 16, you're 16 years old." Says, "Get out on your own." Says, "I don't have any money to give you. Always do what, be honest, and do what's right." And, after that I finished, washed up the dishes, finished my dinner, washed up the dishes, put them away, went up into the room where I spent my 16 years of life, and I gathered up all the things that I had; put them in a flour bag and went down the country road. And, ah, I was a free man. I could do whatever I wanted to. Went, as I came through the, ah, stages, the crossroads of life (inaudible) real temptation to me, I seemed to always take the one that went the best. And for that reason, I, I didn't, I never had drank any, and I don't gamble, haven't gambled, and it was that, ah, living with my grandmother, she called me in and asked me not, not to ever drink. And, those things had an influence on my life so at, ah, this age even that I am today, I could swear that I never took a drink of liquor. And, I, I recommend that to anybody because it's, it's one of the greatest things to be able to, to withstand that, the temptation of drinkin', to be able to withstand that because you, ah, and especially just the present, ah, generation of people. They're, ah, they have the greatest influence of evil that there is. Ever time, there has never been a time that there has been as much temptation for people to do wrong; the young people especially. And, we find so much of it, and, ah, another thing that is (inaudible) in my life growing up. I made a covenant with God that if He would let one of my children live when it was sick, that I would work for Him the rest of my life. And, He let that child live, and the doctor said there wasn't no chance for her, but it lived, and I've, I've tried to live up to that. And, ah, when I went into the church here, why, ah, I done the Scoutmaster for six and a half years of two Scout nights a week of boys of Scout boys, and they was at least a hundred boys went through the ranks



when I was Scoutmaster. And, ah, I had a lot of people think, well, now, that a Scout, Scoutmaster doesn't have anything to worry him, but I had the boys that I was training as Scouts, they, they, ah, they were just the right age for the Second World War and when they went into that, then I, my assistant Scoutmaster was one of the finest American boys that I ever seen. And, he, he was shot down over Germany when they, when the Germans, when the United, the Allies had the greatest loss, and he was shot down and never was heard of. And, after that then that boy, his loss was same as if he had been one of my family. And, his, his father just grieved over it until he, he just, ah, walked the streets and never did, never was able to overcome that. Well, there's, ah, I've seen lots of things happen in my lifetime. Now, now the community where I was raised at one time there was 21 families there that made all made their living by farming. And, today there isn't a one of the people there that farms. They, they, ah, living without on, on other income from farming. Now, is there any other questions that you'd like to ask.

BB: Ah, what about your schooling?

VM: Well, now, my schooling, I, ah, I went to this school, it was a school about a mile from where I lived, where I was raised and, ah, I went up and finished the eighth grade of, ah, school. Then when I went, when I left my home, I went down out on this Sunday afternoon, the next morning I started to work on a job. And, I then worked on that job for eight days. That's all the days I'd worked by the day in my life. I went to work then for a man in town who had a store, and, ah, he, ah, he had a job of hauling old freight. Well, I was hauling the frieght for him, driving the wagon, and I hauled all the, the seats that went into Pax High School there at Pax. ~~BB: Uh huh.~~ So, then when carrying, taking those seats up there, I got interested in school, and I told this man, I said, "I want to go to school this winter." He says, "If you'll go to school, I'll board you for what you can do of a Saturdays, and, ah, and, ah, Fridays, and the evening after you come in and Saturdays. And, I'll board you free of, ah, for that." And, I had a few dollars saved, and I got, gathered all my books, and I got ready and went back to Pax High School; and, ah, I worked in that, I'd go home and work until about nine, ten o'clock at night, and then I'd go get my lessons. And, I led the class in the school, and, ah, the

next spring then I took an examination and made a Number Three Teacher's Certificate. And, ah, I never did, I just taught extra in that school house while I was in the school. And, I never did teach school (inaudible) I went into office work after that [BB: Uh huh.] and, ah, and, ah, become an accountant and worked for a man at, ah, at Willowood round close to my home. Now, what else would you like to know?

BB: Ah, what about sports? Did you participate in sports very much?

VM: Well, I didn't at that time. The only thing we had in sports there was my country school where I first grew up. We had the only think was then just played base (inaudible), and we played base and we'd have, when we'd have a snow, we'd have, play fox and goose, you know, make a track around [BB: Uh huh.], play fox and goose. And, ah, then we got so we got to having, ah, playing ball, ah, baseball. After each school would have a team, and we'd play against other teams. Outside of that, that's the only sport I ever engaged in. Now, at Pax, I don't recall if ever being engaged in any, any sports there at all. They didn't have basketball there then. [BB: Uh huh.] And, I, I didn't engage in anything like that.

BB: Uh huh. Well, ah, tell us about, ah, in your early days you said you had a teacher's certificate. Ah, tell us about your, ah, teaching.

VM: Well, in teaching, you mean my teaching, my experiences in teaching?

BB: Yes.

VM: Well, I, ah, I'd have to substitute in where whatever class was there, and I could always, you see, I was about the headest, the head of the schools in that, in about any of them in the school. I knew more about their, about the subject than they did, and I could, ah, just take it over just like the teacher elected. And, I'd teach, and, ah, I made one thing when I first went, started in the school. I'd find some very interesting thing that, ah, would be pretty technical that I wanted to keep, ah, want to retain, and I had me a book, and I'd index that book; and I'd keep that subject all written down, and then I finished, then after I finished the school, I had that book, and

I could just go to that and get the answers to a lot of the things. That's the way I accumulated my knowledge and out of that I accumulated, ah, ah, a mind of an inventor. I've invented five United States Patents. Yeah, have five United States Patents [BB: Uh huh.] that I invented just, ah, another, I wasn't a college graduate or anything like that, but from being on the farm. A farmer has to, if he doesn't have the proper thing to do a thing with, he'll have to invent something to do it with. And, you'll find that the, the greatest, the most technical inventions that we have, have been produced from farmers. Their, their wheel, their, their things that they make their cloth with. All of the ways they handled their by-products, their cotton. How to get that into the workable material like thread and stuff like that. That's all been handed down, and there's one of the, the, the, it's a very fascinating field just to see what the farmers have done in the way of, we, we, know that the, ah, the greatest scientist are the ones of the present age, but those farmers back in those days were able to (inaudible), and, ah, they, that was the reason that they, ah, they were able to just to even live and, ah, if they hadn't been able to, to substitute.

BB: Ah, what five things have you invented?

VM: Well, I invented a, a road cleaner for a coal mine. I invented, ah, brake guage for an automobile, ah, to break, ah, to test the guage on the, ah, the, the wheels, the wheels of the automobile; and, ah, I invented, ah, ah, collecting, no, it was, ah, ah, fish plate with a connecting, ah, bond in this fish plate for a coal mine. That was three of them. And, then, let me see, now, what, ah, that was how many have I got now, three? [BB: Three.] And, I invented a back brace. And, I, ah, I've got one on now. I wear it. But, when I was, ah, 15 years ago, I was told by the doctor, by the hospital at Baltimore that I would never work again. And, they, when I came home, I, I got interested in trying to invent me a back brace and invented a back brace and got to wearing it, and it cured myself. Ah, that, you see, that I have, and I built this house here after they told me I would never be able to work again.

BB: Ah, what about your religious life?

VM: My religious efforts?

BB: Uh huh.

VM: Well, I, ah, I was a good, good person as far as, ah, ah, doing wrong and right, right and wrong. I always, ah, did pretty well what was right. And, I tried to be honest like my grandfather said. But, ah, it was after I, when I, when I first made that covenant with God about my, if He let my baby live. I was in Logan County with no churches there around up in the area where I was. Then when I moved over here and my daughter, I had a little daughter that was, ah, was expected to die, that was Jean, that was my oldest daughter, she, she begin to go to a Methodist Church. And, one Sunday she invited me to go to Sunday School with her. And, I went to, I went, then I went to Sunday School with her and started and I hadn't, hadn't had any, ah, (inaudible) and the reason we joined the church until, there a layman of the church came by my office one day. And, he said to me, said, "Mr. Martin, you're too good a man to be outside the church." That's all he said, and the next Sunday I went up and joined the church. Then after that, why, ah, just, just tell you one of my little experiences in the church there, ah, I was invited then to work as counsel in the Methodist Church. That's been, I expect, 40 years ago. And, when I went in to this to work as counsel, I found out they had, ah, boy, ah, a School, a Sunday School Class of boys, and about, ah, ten to 12 boys and no teacher. And, I never had taught Sunday School Class. I said, "Well, I'll teach them." All right, I went into to teach them Sunday School Class, and the first Sunday I could see why they didn't have a teacher because all it was just, just disturb the class so you couldn't teach, and I went on through that and when, when Sunday, when come up, I decided what I was going to do. And, when next Sunday come, I told them, I said, the, ah, "We can't, we can't do that, play, and things like that," say, "not any place here." And, I said, "Now, I'm, I want to, ah, select one of you boys to come here and sit by me and when the class get out of, ah, order, I'll just stop and let that whoever comes here, let them take over and restore order, and then I'll go ahead and teach class." And, ah, so I picked out the ring leader of the boys that were disturbing the class. And, I did that then, and, ah, they said, yes, they would agree to that. I said, "All right, Marvin, you come up here, and sit right here with me." Marvin Dower, and he's just a young man then. And, he kept that class there in, ah, in a couple of Sunday's after

that we had a model class. One of the best boys classes in the, in the school. Well, it went along through like that; everything worked out so nice and good, and we, we got along so good in school. Then, ah, after he grew up to be 18 years old, this same boy that I'm speaking of, he grew up to be 18 years old, and he, ah, had graduated from high school and went to work for one of the (inaudible) companies and was subject to, ah, he was exposed to an explosion went off, and it burnt him severely. He, he died from the results of the burns, and he was in the, ah, ambulance going to the hospital and his mother was in the ambulance with him. And, he said to her, to his mother, said, "Mother," said, "now whatever happens to me," say, "you remember I'm a Christian." And, that came out of just the fact that I had, had the patience with him to go in there and, and just be led in there to have, to take charge of him and get him life started in the right way that he was able to say that. If I hadn't, if it hadn't have happened for me to do that, he, he would have probably been a lost boy. But, as it was, he was just a typical example of a fine Christian boy. Well, I have .... I was in with Church, and I, ah, I tried to be just as loyal to the Church as I could. I did a whole lot of work for the Church. Just to do, do it for nothing and keep everything going and the preacher depended on me anytime that they wanted something, something done they called on me. And, I, I was, ah, very very close to the Church, and I was glad to be able to do it. And, I served in the Church as a Lay Leader of the Church and as layman for the, ah, to go to the district. I served more than anybody else in the Methodist Church. Went to the, went to the Methodist, ah, Layman, I mean, the Methodist, ah, Conferences, and I went to the Laymen's Institute. I've been there about, I guess about 20 times, 20 years. I've been to the Laymen's Institute at, ah, at Buckhannon, the Methodist Church. And, ah, then I was secretary to the Church for I guess about 10, 12 years in the Methodist Church, and I was also, ah, ah, the, ah, served some a few years as the Chairman of the Official Board of the Methodist Church. And, outside then, I was Lay, Lay Leader in the Church, and then I was, ah, ah, kind of Lay, Lay Leaders, ah, speaking, ah, part that I, and I held church for, ah, one, ah, one, ah, the pastor of the Church, he had a heart attack, and I held his church for him for three months until he could recover and get back onto his job again. And, that was around in this area here, but I never would accept any money for it from him. I went ahead

and did that every Sunday morning. I'd go down Sunday School, and I, I increased the Sunday School from 30 up to 60 and the church attendance in about the same proportion. And, got along, I got along fine and never had any trouble with the church at all.

BB: Well, ah, what about the Depression? How did you live during that time?

VM: Well, the, ah, during the Depression, why, ah, I was working for the New River Company. I had, ah, I came and applied to them for a job, and I went to work for them in 1925, and, ah, I went to work for them at a \$140 a month. Well, that gave me a pretty steady job, and I was able to take care of the work. They had a man at the job that couldn't take care of it, and I was able to take care of it. So, I kept, they kept me on that job, and I was on that job, ah, that was the, where I spent the biggest job during the Depression. And, for 35 years I worked at that same job for that same company, and, ah, I was a lot of the time, I was the assistant, ah, superintendent of the machine shop. And, today, and, ah .... I can sit on my front porch here after I retired, and I look and see in and see the door that I went through for 35 years down in the valley down there in the building where I went to for 35 years of in and out that door. All of those years there and that way I, I lived through the Depression and raised my family. I raised six children; we raised six children. We sent, ah, ah, three of them finished college; one of them had some college education, and all of them finished high school. And, they, ah, the ones that with have the, two of them are out of them State of West Virginia that the, they're, one of them is a teacher and the other one is an electrical engineer from the West Virginia .... University.

BB: You say you always lived pretty good before that didn't you?

VM: Yeah, yeah, we lived on the farm. Now, I raised all my family on the farm over there. I'd, I'd drive back and forth to work and then in the summertime, the wintertime we built us a house down there, and we moved down there. Then, we'd move out in the country in the summertime and raise, ah, we raised our family there, and one of my sons then, he went into the during, during the Depression he went into the dairy business. I, I, I had, wasn't no loss of income. I had my income all the way

straight through, all the time. And, ah, I provided for the family, and we had, had a nice farm. We built, we worked, I worked, outside work, the work we're doing down here, but we still had to work, well, I would, I would go outside there then and do as much as most men would do all day long. I'd go there, you know, and change clothes, and I would have a long time before nighttime would come. Then I'd have Saturday's afternoons off and worked (inaudible) and then go back to the farm. That's where I worked there and raised, raised my boys, my children all up on the farm. And, I, I attribute, now, they are, they are all very, very fine young men if I have to boast myself. But, the, ah, they, they were raised up on the farm. Never seen one of them take a drink of any kind of alcohol. I never seen a one of them, ever heard one of them swear. And, they, ah, they just, now, Dave, he'd gather up, and we'd just feel just as nice together, you know, with my three boys, and we'd talk, and we've never had a short word with each other. Got along fine all the way through. And, they're, they're (inaudible).

BB: That's good. Was there anything else you were involved in, like politics or anything?

VM: Well, I was, I was in politics, and, ah, I, ah, became a candidate for, ah, ah, Commissioner of Agriculture. That was back about 1940 I reckon it was. And, I, ah, I would have won the contest, but I didn't get out enough. I just, I never lost a day's work. And, I, I lost in the, in the primary, and, ah, it was good news. Well, I'll get that later on. I've got one of my cards that I had when I was Commissioner, running for the Commissioner of Agriculture. I still have that card. I'll get it in a little bit. Now, what, is there anything else besides that, and, too, now, I might mention while, while we're talking about politics. I'd just like to illustrate. One time I heard that there was going to be a trial in Logan County, and there was a friend there I used to be in Logan County that was going to be sent to the penitentiary because he had a great deal of influence in that county. And, there was a group came out of the state capitol and went there to send him to the penitentiary. And, I set, set in there and listened to the trial and for three days, and they, they had there I wrote down all the things that I thought was undemocratic in the trial, and they's one thing they had one man there that couldn't read nor write, and he was a, he was a

witness for this defense. And, he couldn't read nor write, and they had gone to him beforehand, and he was a good man. He could handle, handle men, and he could get jobs done. Well, they took this, they took him then and made him, got him to make a statement about where all he had done all this work, and then they went back and, and, and brought up charges that he hadn't any authorization to do that, and, ah, they had, he had, he had, they wrote all that down on paper and write in beside it at the bottom of the paper. And, when they had him sign it there, why, ah, then entered, they brought that in and the judge admitted that as evidence. Well, when they did that, and then I came back, and I wrote this, this friend of mine there a letter and told him all the different things where they had been, had, ah, violated democracy, and I brought out this about this, ah, this statement. I said, they, ah, instead of giving, ah, ah, an illerate man, he couldn't read nor write, instead of him a fair chance they took advantage of him. I said, now, they, they didn't give him a copy of the letter of the statement, and they went ahead, and they could have gone back above that and wrote anything they wanted to above that, and it been, it would have come a part of it. So, that, I sent a copy of that letter to the President of the United States, and Lyndon B. Johnson was President, and he called in the United States Supreme Court and had them to issue a decree that any evidence obtained in that way unless the person was told that it was going to be used as evidence or that he could have it he could say, well, I've got to have a lawyer. And, you have to put a lawyer there with him to tell him what to say and what not to say because he was, he had self incrimination there that they could get him for .... ah, making sure that you're not allowed to to that. You're not, you're not supposed to, so you go ahead and tell something and convict you of your own evidence. And, that's what he himself had done. But, he had them issue that decree and that came, that went all over the United States; that decree came from that that, ah, that little bit of indulgence I had in politics. [BB: Uh huh.] And, I, I think I'm pretty proud of that because just think of how one, one case of one person that had been tried. There he was, ah, an ex-service man, he came home and went bezerk and killed a woman. All right, she loved the lawyer that defended him, and he got life sentence. Well, that lawyer that defended him was the same one that was defending this, this man that I was just talking about. And, he, when he got that, ah, letter back



there about that, ah, that statement there and then he went to the State Supreme Court and got a new trial for him and he got ten years where he got life before. I just saved that man that much by doing that.

BB: Ah, how did you get started in politics?

VM: Well, I, ah, my, my grandfather raised me, and he was a rebel Democrat. Well, on account of the fact I always thought so, well, now, I owed him something for raising me because he took me when I was just a mere child, and he raised me, and he, he kept me while I was getting a education. Now, I had to work. I worked hard and, ah, on account of the fact that he was a Democrat, I always said that I'd have, I'll have to live my life a Democrat. And, I'm a Democrat, but I, ah, I can see so many things that, ah, our Democrats of the present days don't, don't comply with what I thought ought to be a Democrat when he was in, he was in, ah, living and, ah, whenever they don't do what's right I criticize them the same as I would, ah, a Republican. And, if I see a man is a good man, I don't make any difference what politics he is I vote for him if I, I think he be a good man. [BB: Uh huh.] That's what I, I got by. I don't, and I'm, I', I'm, I'm opposed to these threats of, ah, machines of Democrats or Republicans either one getting together like, like we've had in the past. In recent years, it's, ah, just a political thing, you know, and it's, ah, it, it just brings terrible suffering on for cases like that.

BB: Ah, do you remember any, ah, other interesting events that happened back then in politics?

VM: No, I don't, ah, let's see, I don't think of any right now of, ah, politics. The, of course, this, this present one that we're in now, I've, ah, I'll take my stand with the Republicans and let the, I'm opposed to what, what the Watergate is doing. I'm opposed to that for the simple reason that it's, ah, ah, the President has done one, some of the greatest things. The way I look at it if you were going to take a man out, and he'd violated the law you think, and you've got to give consideration to what he had done that's good, what he done of benefit. He stopped, ah, ah, he stopped the war. Yeah, that was one. It had been 30 years that that been going on. [BB: Uh huh.] I wrote a piece in the paper just the other day, came, came

through in yesterday's paper. And, ah, one woman was calling me about it. There, I stated in there that, ah, for 30 years this, ah, ah, everyone, anyone, everybody away from high school or college just as quick as they graduated Uncle Sam was standing nearby to pick them up and send them in maybe to some foreign country to, to serve on, in a war in some foreign country there. Everyone of them, now, and there wasn't no freedom. They didn't have nothing, no other choice but to do that. But, this present, ah, time, rightnow, this, ah, graduating series of time, of the school and the college today, they, they can go ahead. They don't have to, they don't have to think about Uncle Sam going to want them. They can go ahead and plan their life as a free and independent person. And, that's one of the greatest things that you can think of. Just think what that means.

[BB: Uh huh.] And, I, ah, my, ah (inaudible), I had to go down and put down some pretty hard information into the paper before they would publish it. And, and I, I just told them I'm going to win you over to my way of thinking. Here's, ah, how I won it. I said, the, ah, I have a picture in my possession of a young man, and he's waving good by to his wife and three small children telling each of them good by on September of 1944 and going into the Second World Series, ah, Second World War. And, ah, then, in January he wrote his mother a letter. And, I read that letter and in that letter he said, he said, said, "I have just returned from the battle front for three days and nights without relief." He said, "Both of my feet are frozen." He said, "I want to be a minister if God spares me to return home." And, then he was, there was some other things related to his family and so forth and then the writing begin to become, become hurried again, and he said, "I have been called to the front again. I've got to go." Said, "God be with you," said, "good by and God be with you till we meet again." All right, the only thing that ever become the remains of his what few possessions he had they put in a box. He, his body never was recovered. They don't know what happened to him. He went out at zero at night, and he wanted to go out there in the battle front and now that's what he was up against. Just a young man, and his son right now, that baby was in arms, just a little boy baby when that picture was made is the manager of the Bec--YMCA in Beckley over there today. He never seen his father except when he was just a little baby looking at his father. [BB: That's Bob Bolen.] That's right, Bob Bolen. And, it was his father the one I was telling you about. Now, that's just an example of what the boys had to go through with.

AH, in that, in the war, and, ah, that's when I, why I wrote that piece there about, ah, at the present day, the youth of today, they've got one of the greatest relief that could happen to them, and, ah, President Nixon was the one that brought that on; and I believe that he is going to have, going to have peace all over the world, and, ah, nations will know we've got all the communication facility. We've got radio and television. We've got everyday to use a, to use a persuasive argument. And, if there's any difference between nations, so just like they're doing today. Go out there and adjust those things, because, ah, now, you know, in the Bible a lot of people say that the because Christ said they'll be wars and rumors of war, but in the Bible God said that they, people will get their cannons and plow shares and then no more, war no more. They never know when it's going to war after that. All right, then, Christ said, He said that there would be rumors of war. In my opinion about He was thinking there'd be war between the righteous and the unrighteous people. Their, their battle there, you see. Take, go out here and your churches, and you'll find your righteous people in your church. All right, you find out here around sleeping late. They was out late last night doing things that wasn't right in the sight of God, and they'll battle between those forces, you see. The righteous, they, they're trying to do what they can to doubt it and on the other side the ones that they, they don't want anything to do with it. And, that's what Christ was talking about.

BB: Did you ever go in the service any?

VM: No, I'll tell you what, what I did. I was the (inaudible) when I was in Logan County, and I was 20 years old when I went over there, and the night when I became 21. And, I went down to work, I was 20 years old, and the job I took I had relieved a man that was going in the service and after, after about a month's work there they drafted another man, and they asked me if I would take care of his work until they could get someone. And, I took that job in addition to the one I had. Then, it wasn't real long they drafted another man, express agent, and they came to me, "Can you handle this until we can get some fellow?" And, I took that, and I had those three jobs, and that's where I learned, I when I go out to walk, I walk like I'm a running. That's where I learned to walk on the job. Well, then, when it come time for me to, ah, register, ah, I registered. Then when it come time for me to be called

on to go down for me to call for examination. Well, I was young and kind of wiry. I didn't have much weight to me. I didn't weigh about 115 pounds, but and the company didn't think that I would, ah, pass examination. Well, I got on a train at six o'clock in the morning and went down to Logan.

## SIDE TWO

Well, when they put me in, in there, ah, to write down the information while I was examined, and I was the only perfect man that they had examined all day long. I didn't have a thing wrong with my teeth, and there wasn't anything wrong with my body. I was perfect. Well, when I went back home then up town to work, why, ah, I got my card A-1. Well, I, ah, that wasn't just a little bit, and I got my card, got a card was called to come down on the 18th September. And, I went up and told him, you know, showed them the card, and, ah, they said, "Well, we're going to see what we can do." And, I, they told me, now, my, my wife was in the family way, and they, ah, the doc--they had told me said, "If you'll go to the doctor and get a statement from the doctor, why, well, ah, we can get you exempt, exempt." I said, "No," I said, "I have friends that have gone. They've had to go, and they haven't done it," and I said, "I'm not going to hide behind any petticoat." I said, "I'll go. I'll, I'll go ahead and take my (inaudible) along with the others." Well, I had everything all ready to go out, and it was on Saturday afternoon, Saturday at 12 o'clock and the general manager came down to me, and I was working down at the house mowing my lawn, and he said, "Martin," says, ah, ah, "what are you going to do this afternoon?" I said, "Well, Mr. Clapton, I've got to mow my lawn here. I'm going to leave, I've got to leave Monday morning for the service." He said, "Well, you go to Logan with me this afternoon?" I said, "Yeah, but what if you want me to, why, I'll go." So, we got in an old T-Model Ford and went to Logan. He went around and the, the, ah, office there where they, ah, where they took them in, it was closed up, and he went and got the man, you know, and had him open up the office, come over. And, he then told him, "What story is it is here? You promised us that you were going to exempt some of our men that we've got to have up there to keep our mines running." Said, "Now, here's a young man that he's doing the work of three men," and he said, "he can't take that many men's places at the front." And, said, "You haven't exempted a one of our men up there yet."

And, said, "We want this man exempted." And when he said that to him, he said, "Well," says, "I'll call Charleston, but I believe it's too late." So, he called Charleston, and he talked to them, explained what the situation was. And, I, I just waited till they got through talking. And, after he finished there, why, I said, "Well, ah, will, I come out Monday morning?" Said, "No," said, "you go back and wait till you hear from us." Well, on Wednesday of that week then that I was to go out, why, I got a card from them. I was put in D-2, and I was, ah, deferred and that was in September and the war ended in November of that same year, in 1918.

BB: Ah, you remember anything, ah, about the First World War reading in the paper?

VM: Well, yes, I did, ah, I read a good bit about it. Of course, we kept, we kept right to the news with it, and, and we had there at the mines. We, ah, we had a lot of incentive for the men to work and to, ah, not, not lay off. We had a good troop of men and usually they'd be all .... on certain days, but they, everyone worked right up to the very time that they should work. And, they was good loyal (inaudible), and, ah, but I know one thing that happened when war was declared ended the greatest celebration that I ever seen everywhere. Oh, just, it was tremendous. That the people, you know, just how glad they were that the war was over with, and there was one friend of mine that was drafted, and he went over there in Germany and he was, ah, he was a good size man, weighed about 180 pounds, and he was missing in action. And, I, I dreamed about him. He was a buddy of mine, and I dreamed about him every night. Then when the war was over with, why, he, he had captured, there was seven of them that got in the building and they had shot the building all to pieces and them that seven was all that was saved. And they took them into their camp, and he said they lived in on old beets and beet tops and junk like that that he weighed 80 pounds when he got out of the army. And they, ah, they turned them out, but I dreamed about him every night. I'd dream about that fellow in, bein' there .... there wasn't no message of where he was. I, I thought he was dead. Well, when they, ah, then when the war was over with, why, he got back home. He came back home, and, ah, I met with him. I came over as soon as quick as he came out of the service. I came back over here, out in Logan.

And, his brother and I went ahead and bought him a new suit of clothes and fixed him up, and then he went to work at (inaudible) Mine was workin' on the shaft, a big old pipe run, fell, run right through him, killed him. Just he hadn't, well, I guess he had been out about a couple of years when that happened to him. And, that's, ah, I'll, ah, that world war I had a lot of friends that were in the world war, and, ah, they, they told me about it, but that World War I wasn't, that one wasn't anything compared to what went on in this Second World war because they, then they didn't have the material, the fighting equipment. [BB: Uh huh.] But, I can tell you one thing, now, we, we done right, got things to look at is, ah, that I thought this out myself. That, ah, we think of the, ah, of the wars, and, ah, we wonder if this nation is a Godly nation because that Hitler, now, we of the United States when we want possessions from other countries, we buy it. We don't go out and take it away from them. We could go down and take Mexico over night or we could go up and take Canada over night, but we're not, ah, that kind of a nation. We, we, we, ah, now, we've got possession, we've got, we bought it, it was boughten in, ah, different purchases, and that's the way we have, ah, lived that kind of life, but over there in Europe they try to go in and over power 'em, take it away from them. And, so Hitler, now, he was developing, ah, getting ready for a war he was, he was, ah, that was his, his, idea was to conquer Europe. And, then, then probably sometime he'd conquer the United States, but he was building war material all the time while we was sittin' over here doin', tending to our own business and wasn't thinking about trying to winning a war. Then, when the war came on, we had the ocean dividing us, and we then all we had to do was to see what he had and see how how he used it, you know, and see what he had. Then, we had all of our raw materials in the, ah, into raw material, and we could make that into bigger and better stuff than he had; and, therefore, God led us to do that. We didn't do it by good management. We never thought about ever having to do anything like that, but it come out there as the very thing to do that we set down and, we found out we was going to have to be involved in that war then we had an opportunity to just go ahead and gather up all of our raw material and build it into better, bigger, bomber, bigger airplanes and explosives and all the things needed to win the war with. And, we got ready to set down on that that where that boy was killed I was telling you about there, when they went in there on that great last

drive, and, ah, it just to give you a little illustration of it after, oh, just a few years ago before, ah, Eisenhower, ah, Dwight D. Eisenhower was president before he died, ah, Chamberlain over in Great Britain had passed away; and he one of the great war leaders, and there was people all over the world you might say trying some way to pay a tribute to him, and they came over here they was, ah . . . . one of the, ah [BB whispers: Winston Churchill.], huh? [BB whispers: That was Churchill.] Churchill, yes, it was, yeah, Winston Churchill. And, ah, ah, they came over here and went to down to Gettysburg to see, ah, Dwight D. Eisenhower, and they set down, and they was talking to him and they said, "Now, ah, Mr. President or Mr. Mr. General," said, "you was (inaudible) of the relations, different things happen between you and Winston Churchill." Said, "What, ah, can you recall anything of the different things." He told of the different things, you know, where they'd make plans. He said, "Was there ever any plans you all made that you didn't agree with him?" He said, "No." Said, "Yeah." Well, yeah, well, wait a minute. He said, "When we would make our real, our last drive," said, "that we knew that was going to be the end of the war, and we had our plans made to to go in a direct way that we could get away from the, ah, from the fire of the enemy," and said, "here was another (inaudible) way we could got around, and we said, ah, we'd see. It would be more of our people over there and be more of the Winston Churchill people see the process of it, and they'd be impressed by what a great thing I'm a doin', you know, and, ah, we got right on but we lose more men that way." Dwight, ah, I mean, ah, General Eisenhower listened to him. He said, "Now, Sir Winston," he said, "if your idea has any political implications whatever," says, "count me out on it." He didn't want to lose one man and didn't want to lose any man's life just for a political impressions he might make. And, I just thought, now, that's one of the greatest things that a man could ever have said. For him to say that and, ah, just for it to turn out like that. And, he, now is one of the greatest men that this nation has ever had is Dwight D. Eisenhower. And the thing he done, he was just as, ah, just in every way, he was just a perfect gentleman and a great war hero.

BB: How was he as a president?

VM: Beg your pardon.

BB: How was he as a president?

VM: He was a good man. Yes sir, he was, he was elected, ah, except this last election might have been pretty close then, but he was elected by the greatest majority of any president that was ever elected. And, he as a president he was, ah, now, the all the men around him were, they, they were good honest men. Wasn't any, any political and, he, ah, he didn't make any difference in politics. Of course, when he, ah, came up to run for president that the first time anybody knew whether he was Democrat or Republican cause he (inaudible). Here's why he was such a great president. He had been a general, and he had been there, and he had seen men die and he'd seen what men would have to go through with, and, ah, a person like that he's got an insight into world conditions. And, the nations over there, they all respected him; even the enemy respected him. And, he, ah, he, he could handle affairs, and he could, ah, just this world we've had since then would have never happened if he would have been a livin'.

BB: Who do you think was the greatest president during your lifetime?

VM: During my lifetime, well, it .... the president would be different in certain ways. But, one of the greatest presidents, now, in one way, although this man there would be several of them that out, ah, that make, that out, that stand out in certain, ah, situations. Now, President Hoover was a great man, but he went down in history as one of the poorest presidents that we ever had, but he, he based on economy, and he was, ah, he, he didn't allow our nation to get into, into debt like we are today. He, ah, he believed in, ah, in that and that's what brought on the, what we call the Depression. But, today, we'd have to go back and say he was a great man. But, ah, the greatest man then was President Roosevelt. He came through, and he instituted some of the greatest things. Ah, here's the reason why he was the greatest man because he had a concern, you see, he was, ah, practically an invalid, and he had a concern for the common people. And, he's the one that got this Social Security through and that .... up until that when I was a boy growing up if a man, everybody had to look forward to the time that they would be helpless and they had to work and lay away and, ah, to, to survive or they would have to go to the poor house to live and die in the poor house. And, one of the things that every, every



person they, they, ah, just didn't want to be doing that. They didn't want to be going to the poor house to die, and they'd lay it away and take care of it. But, today take the workman today, said, "I can spend all of my money on drinkin' and havin' a good time all I want to because, ah, Social Security will take care of me when I, I get too old to work. Social Security take care of me." And, it has bad features. It is good and take care of 'em but you just get out here on the first day of the month, ah, when Social Security Card pay comes through, and you find loads after loads of car loads of people that are old, and they ought to be thinking about getting ready to die. Here they are just around and drinkin' on it and carryin' on you know. Now, not, not doin' anybody any good, and that's one of the bad features of it, but I would say that Roosevelt was a good man. Next one, then the next one we had I'm just going to have to say it was Eisenhower. BB: Uh huh. That's the greatest president that we've ever had.

BB: Well, ah, did your sons ever go into the service?

VM: No, I had one in service, Bob. Now, Bill when, that's my oldest son, he, we was on the farm, and he, ah, when he was 17 years old, he graduated from high school, and I come in from work one evening he said, "Daddy," he says, "I've, ah, I cleaned up that chickenhouse up there, and I'm, ah, going into the dairy business." And, I said, "Well, Bill, you've never did milk a cow. What, what do you got here?" He took me up there and showed me. He said, "Now, I called the inspector over here, and he said go ahead." And, he had room, I think, for about six cows. BB: Uh huh. And, he said, "I want to go into the dairy business." And, I, I endorsed his note to buy him some cows with, and he went ahead and bought cows. And, he started into that, and he first thought he, he was sellin' about eight quarts a day, and he kept on picking it up. Well, that was about two or three years before the war. Then when he got, when the war came around, he got it all built up until he had, he had about 30 cows and then when that came up then and Edward was in with him, why, they was into the dairy business, and that exempted them. They didn't have to go on account of that because they exempted all farmers, and they, they tried to, tried to get me to quit my job down here. I was too old for it to quit my job and go out there on the farm, you know, and take that on. And, I said

"No," I said, "I'm too old a man to take on a job like that, and, ah, so they, they exempted them, those two now. That's the boy, the youngest one I had. That's Bob, he served his two years. He was in the greatest peace time maneuvers that they ever had. He was a, he was a graduate of West Virginia University, and when he went into the army, he, he told me, he said, "Daddy," he says, "I don't tell any of the boys, any of the people that I like, I have to be in charge of a group," he said, "and I never tell them that I've been to college." Says, "I never say anything to them about it." He said, "If I did, why, they'd, they'd feel kind of, ah, hard toward me think I was big, that I was a big shot or something." And, what he said then I found out afterwards that he was in the top ten (inaudible) and every man in that group was a college graduate. And, he was one of them.

BB: Uh huh. When did you all first come to Mt. Hope?

VM: Mt. Hope? We came in, ah, well, I was born, I was born, ah, ah, lived over here. My mother died right over here. Ah, we first moved to Mt. Hope over there about 1923 from Logan, Logan County over here in 1923. Then I went to work for New River Company down here June 25, 1925.

BB: How was it like in those days? They tell me it was pretty, ah, busy town.

VM: It was a pretty busy town and all, and I, ah, I was workin' in the office down there. I got to work in the morning at, ah, 7:30 and work of six o'clock of a night and then I got promoted and kept on until I got working over here in the shop, and I worked out here about 35 years. But, ah, we, we got along all right. We;d had, ah, we'd lay some farm product and we'd, ah, buy from the country store, buy whatever we needed, and I, I was able to work, and I've always industrious enough that I could, ah, do just about as much work. Now, I, I cleaned up the farm over there that I had. I bought that farm, paid, paid for it, and we moæd there on the farm. Then, I, I cleared, it was just, ah, just wasn't just a very little bit of land that you could tend. Got it all cleared up and got it so we could have a dairy farm there, and I bought it for, ah, I bought it for \$4,000, and I kept workin' on it and improving it and got the dairy, dairy, ah, on there and everything, and then we sold it and moved here to Mt. Hope.

And, we lived over here in the summertime and moved out, I mean, sometimes move out there and in the wintertime move back down here to go to school. You see when the leaves are off, you can see our house down there. We still have the house. Ah, Jim, and my son, and my grandson livin' in there.

BB: What about the New River Company was it any more, ah, financially well off than it is now?

VM: Well, yes, it has been at one degree one of the leading smokeless coal producers in this area anywhere with great big companies at one time. And, they I don't know how many employees they did have. It was up in the thousands, and, ah, they now they have, ah, they just kind of phased it out until they don't have very much possessions. They just, they've got it, we used to have 70, 70 some men working in machine shop, and now there is about four. [BB: Uh huh.] And, in the general office we used to have a great big group in there about 75 I expect, and, ah, now there's only about two offices in there. There's about eight or ten people working there now [BB: Uh huh.], and the production is pretty low compared to what it used to be. Used to be used to have 14, how many is it, 13 stores was full. Thirteen stores, and they had that many coal mines.

BB: Is there anything else you want to talk about?

VM: Well, I don't know of anything else, but, ah, I think would be of interest, ah, that I can think of. Just like to, like to say this that the young people of today if they just take advantage of their, ah, opportunities for an education and, ah, don't now get impatient because you're not, not doing as well as you think you'd like to, you know, like financially; and I'd just like to give you a little one illustration for the young people. I think it would be a good example for them. I started to work for a coal company down here, The New River Consolidated Coal Company just after I graduated from school and had this certificate to teach school. This man offered me a job. And, we, I went up there, and was was taking inventory in a in, ah, warehouse there and just as cold as blue blazes, and we had a little fire in a stove down in there to heat by. We .... this man was my boss, and he and I was working together, and he got in, we'd go down there, and he said, "Come down to the warm," and then we'd go back and get warm. Well, there was a fellow in a machine shop next to us, but

you could climb<sup>b</sup> up over there and look over in this place.

[BB: Uh huh.] When the whistle blowed there about three o'clock and this boss was with me he said, "Well," said, "I've got to go down to work. I'll go down here and billow out the coal .... you just go ahead work until quitting time, and, ah, come on over to the office then." I said, "All right." So, I climbed back up there, and I never stopped; I just kept working. I never climbed down to get warm at all, just kept on a working. Well, the next morning when I went back up there to work he said, ah, "You're, you're just to go over there work in a while; you're not going over there." Said, "You're going to work in here." Says, "I'm, ah, going to be the outside foreman, and you're going to take my place in here." And, I said, "Well, I'll, I'll go ahead and, I'll get ready to." I'd worked a little bit in there. And, so then he said "Do you know why you got that job?" I said, "Well, Mr., ah, Mr. Mack I don't know why." He said, ah, that man over there in that room found me there, Mr. Wise. Said, "He climbed up over there, and he watched you and said you never got down that whole time. Said you was in there over an hour and said you never stopped working all that whole time." And, he said, "Just for that, you don't have to go over there and work that job over there; you've got a better job right here." And, I did, that's, that's an example and just, just come about by, by doing what I ought to do, you see. And, a lots of boys now think you take, take my son, Bob, when he was working, when he was trying to get, ah, do the work, ah, ah, after he got out of the, ah, out the, ah, university, and he come back and working summertime back over here the New River Company, he went way back over there to clean up land, a right-of-way for the power line, and, ah, he was workin' for them and when they, when they, he got out of the army and made an application for a job in Columbus, Ohio, they, the company there spent a \$1,000 investigating his background. They came down here and sent a man all the way back here and hunted up the old foremans he worked for to find out what kind of a workman he was. [BB: Uh huh.] And, I said, now, young people today most times, nine out of ten if they see nobody not watching them they'll sit down. He, he didn't do it. He come in of a night, and he'd just be wore out he'd worked hard. And, I said that, that was the result of it. That was the reward he got that they took him up there and, and give him a job in up there. He's been up there ever since about 15 years, ah, North American Aviation one of the 35 senior

engineers and, ah, works up there. They have, I guess, they have about 10, 12,000 workmen, and he's one of the engineers of that group. Then there's, got him a nice home and all that. That's where he got it from just by doing what he ought to do, and that's, that's the advice I'd give any young man starting out no matter what you're doing do the best you can. Don't beat in any time, and you'll, you'll come out by it. It'll it'll pay off in the long run.

BB: Ah, how many of the mines were around here?

VM: Well, they's been of those mines right around here. There was McDonald, when I came there was McDonald was working, Dublin was working, and Sugar Creek was working, Price Hill was working, (inaudible) was working, and Lee Coal Company up here up Mill Creek was working when I came here to McDonald. First, ah, thing I did, I billed coal for McDonald Mine over there.

BB: Could you, ah, tell us about your scouting activities?

VM: Yes, ah, when I took over as Scout master, I was first Scoutmaster of Troop No. 91, and I had, ah, I took it in doing, I told you, the group and the school that was going to sponsor the Scouts. I said, "I won't take it unless you let me take in any boy that wants to join." Before that they had, ah, Scout Troops here in town that they had to belong to a certain church, and they were, they were selected from select group of people like the higher ups, you know. I said, "The ordinary boy didn't get an opportunity." So they said, "All right, we'll let you bring what you want." And there was one boy that came and wanted to be in the Scouts, and he was an orphan boy. His father had died and left his mother with six children to raise and in that time about the only way she could raise them was by scrubbing and washing and, and doing work like that. And, this boy was 12 years old, and he wanted to get in the Scouts, and I said, "Well, now, if you want to go in the Scouts, I'll pay your Scout tuition, and I'll furnish your Scout Manual. I'll give you a Scout Manual." He said, "All right." And, so he came in with the Scouts, and he was right there ever Scout night, and he done just what he ought to do. And, wasn't long there until finally it wasn't very long after that I got a letter from the Scout Executive in Charleston and wanted me to pick out some boy write and my opinion about prophecy of what that boy would amount to. And, I picked out

that boy that, that orphan boy, and I said, ah, I went ahead and wrote the letter and I said, now, my prophesy for him is that he's a typical American boy, and he's loyal, just as loyal as the day is long, he's a good Christian boy, and he's a patriotic citizen, and I said my prophecy for him in the end will be that he'll be one a great leader someday. And, I went ahead then and closed the letter after I had said that, and I sent the letter down to his, down to the Scout Executive, but I happen to send, mail his mother a copy of that letter. Eight years after that when he was 20 years old, I was in church up here on Sunday night and looked across on the other side of the church, and he was in church. I hadn't seen him for quite a while. He had been out working on different jobs, and I hadn't seen him. And, he motioned me to wait, and when I waited, he come over round to me and come up and spoke to me and he says, he reached in his pocket and pulled out something and handed it to me and said, "Mr. Martin," said, "do you remember this?" And, I opened it up, and it was that letter, a copy of that letter I had written to that Scouting Executive down there. I said, "Yes, I remember that discinctly." He said, "Well," says, ah, I, ah, ah, said, "I'm going to service for my country in the morning," and said, "that's the only evidence that I have that anybody had confidence in me." He said, "That letter is going with me every, anywhere I go, but I'm going away from here." Well, he went on into the service then and went in on (inaudible) Beach Head and received wounds there that killed him. He died from their effect later. Well, when they undressed him there, there was that blood-stained sheet of paper in his pocket there he kept with him. Well, he told me after he come back over here, he said, "When I was out on my patrol of night, out there on the lonely places, I wasn't by myself that letter was with me." He said that letter, he said, ah, "Anybody have that much confidence in me," says, "they'll get the very best that I've got in me, out of me." And, that was a good example, I thought, of a, well, that's about all I've got to say about, about him I guess, but he finally, finally passed away from the results of that.

/BB: Uh huh./ Okay.