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ORAL HISTORY

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Date 7-5-74

Ernest Scott

(Signature - Interviewee)

R. 2 - Box 1 - Milton - W. Va

Address

Date 7-5-74

Karen Jane Hall

(Signature - Witness)



An Interview With:

Ercel Scott

Conducted By:

Karen Hall

Place:

Milton, W. Va.

Date:

July 5, 1974

Transcribed By:

Brenda Perego

KH: (Inaudible) Milton, West Virginia, well (laughs) . . .

ES: Uh, well it's, it's really hard to begin. I lived in the mountains of Kentucky the first part of my life and I came here when I was 15 and, uh, it was really rugged up there because we lived near the Cumberland Gap and my father being a railroader we naturally lived close to the railroad. We did our traveling by train but most of the people traveled by horses and buggy and even the li-, we went to church in a little schoolhouse. Our schoolhouses were
[KH: Yeah.] one room schoolhouses and the preacher came once a month, he rode horseback and he preached and that little house would just be crowded and all that was converted that day he took um right down to the Big Sandy River and baptised um [KH: (Laughs).] and, uh, then when, uh, I was, well even while we lived there the first World War had started in 1914 really that was the beginning of the whole thing
[KH: Um, mmm.] and, uh, alot of our boys were volunteering and going into the service and alot of the people in the mountains of Kentucky were illiterate, they co-, the older ones could not read or write [KH: Yeah.]. And, uh, Clorisa Stewert came from down near Louisville and organized some moonlight schools in different areas up there in the mountains to teach the parents of these sons to read and write so they could, uh, keep in contact with their boys in the service and she called these schools moonlight schools. And we the younger generation took advantage of that we really liked the moonlight schools [KH: Yeah.] but until I was in the 8th grade we, we went to this one room schoolhouse and, uh, alot of times we even skated down the Big Sandy River for 3 miles to go to school, it was more fun, it sounds like a hardship
[KH: (Laughs).] but it was alot of fun,
[KH: Well you couldn't do it today.] and then, uh, I've forgotten what I [KH: Skating down the Big Sandy (laughs).] but, uh, life wasn't, wasn't hard we just didn't want anything else so you accepted it and went on. But we came to West Virginia in 19 and 17 and there was not any highways from Hu-, to Milton from Huntington

they were, they were working then on route 60 and it was made of bricks and, uh, I can remember very well when they brought the bricks within two miles west to our town. We walked all the way down the old C-, was part of the old C&O right a way and we walked down the grade where the crews were coming to, we were so thrilled. But before that the only connection with Huntington except by train the passengers run 4 a day and you could go and come but, uh, uh, there was a, a little touring car belonged to a man named White and he called it the White Bus Service, that's the first bus we ever had to Huntington from Milton / KH: Um, mmm. / . And then after the highways was completed then Greyhound Corporation took over and had much smaller buses than we had today / KH: Oh. / but they were still Greyhound Buses / KH: (Laughs). / and, uh, there wasn't but very few cars in Milton when we first came here in 1917, uh, not over, I say not over 15 and most of um were T Model Fords / KH: Um, mmm. / and one man had a bigger car and we thought he was rich because it was such a, he was one of our more affluent citizens / KH: Yeah. / and, uh, so we traveled mostly to and from the city, cities of Huntington and Charleston by, where we did most of our shopping / KH: Um, mmm. / by train and then, uh, in 19 and 17 of course our boys here were going into the service and the one thing that stands in my mind mostly is, uh, the most clearly is the way we get our daily paper / KH: Um, mmm. / . Now we didn't have T.V.'s and radios then so we'd look for the casualty list each day to see if one of our own loved ones name / KH: Yeah. / was in that casualty list or in those who were captured / KH: Yeah. / in the, and were prisoners. And we had the misfortune to see two of our uncles' name in the captured list which left us in a, a state of, uh, I can't explain it really because you just live from day to day thinking their name would come out on the list that had passed away / KH: Um, mmm. / but several months passed before we knew they were / KH: Um, mmm. / prisoners of war. And then when the Armistice was signed it was a, it was a joyful and a sad occasion because there were so many that didn't come back and

we, uh, we had our book club in our town or in our county where all of our, uh, veterans from World War I who had the fortune my husband and I could get a copy of [KH: Yeah.] and there was a gold star over each boy who had lost his life in that war and then, uh, things were rather prosperous through World War I [KH: Um, mmm.] but later in '29 the depression hit and things were really rough then [KH: Yeah.]. We did, uh, we raised what we ate in, uh, vegetables and we raised our own meats and, uh, kept, we kept chickens and cattle and pigs and probably lived better than I live today (laughter) because I could go to the cellar or, uh, or, uh, cut chicken fat off (laughter) and you had your own meats and things so really we, we didn't live very poorly we had plenty [KH. Yeah.] and not just us all the community was like that [KH: Um, mmm.] since it was a rural community and then, uh, the depression finally eased up in 19 and of course and '41 second World War broked out and then the boys were sent away and the women went into the factories and worked [KH: Um, mmm.] in their places. I think that's the first women lib maybe that I can remember [KH: (Laughs).]. They went of course women went into the service during the second World War but there was so many took jobs in factories and, uh, ammunition plants and things to replenish because our man power was shorten, it took so many of our boys. And then of course we had the radio and the T.V. and the radio then in the second World War not the T.V. so much but, cause that came later. But, uh, the first radio I can ever remember seeing was in a restaurant in Milton and it was just a square box and it had a great big, uh, horn on it, it was just beautiful, it looked like a, a morning glory, just a giant morning glory and it was all painted all beautiful colors, purples and greens it was just the most beautiful thing inside and we thought that was the prettiest thing ever was so we was, we were young people together in that restaurant listen to that radio and, and it did have static [KH: (Laughs).] don't think it didn't because it wasn't like our radios today that you could turn it on and practically

static free [KH: Yeah.] and, uh, then of course our first T.V.'s came later and, but during the second World War we had the radio news each, I'll never forget Walter Cronkite, one of our news commentators that came on each day, each evening and he, we could tell when the news was bad he'd say, "It's been a bad day today." We had often wondered about that because he, when he said that we knew that we had had loses and in the war and, uh, then when the second World War was over I'll never forget V-Day. When the news came that the war was over the town just went wild, we had lost alot of boys and, uh, they were all on the front streets celebrating and the horns were blowing, the church bells ringing and, uh, but there was just alot of people stepped away quietly and when we went into the church they were kneeling there, uh, giving thanks that the war was over and so many of them had lost sons that were in there thankful that the thing was over. But it's been along, uh, well just an awful lot of change in the span of my life that I have seen, I couldn't begin to tell you all of it but we graduated from horse and buggies clear through to planes today [KH: Um, mmm.] and I've had the privilege of riding planes and every way of conveyance I guess there is so there's an awful lot of memories back through the years that, uh, I couldn't put it all down but, uh, in old days back in the late teens and early twenties the church was about the only thing we had for our [KH: Um, mmm.] recreation everything centered around our churches. And I think we might have lost something there because today there's so many things that take us from our church, it isn't the most important thing in our young peoples' lives, they have so many things and it isn't their fault it's, it's a way of life they've got to keep up with the things today and I, even the schools are so different. We begin with the 3 "R's" they have everything and it's just, well words can't, I just couldn't find words to tell ya all that's happened [KH: Um, mmm.] in our area but did I tell you bout the hard road, the bricks and all that [KH: Um, mmm.]/? Oh, but it's, it's been a

marvelous thing to look back over the years
 / KH: Um, mmm. / and I'm looking forward not
 backward but, it's been a marvelous thing to look
 back over the years and see the changes
 / KH: Um, mmm. / that's been in my lifetime.

KH: Let's see you got, you and dad all got married
 in what / ES: 19 and 29. / yeah, you all married
 what 51 years?

ES: We were married 51 and ½ years when he left and it
 was happy years and poor years, we had some bad
 times but mostly it was good times / KH: Yeah. /
 and now looking back / KH: (Laughs). / it all
 seemed good, you know, / KH: Yeah. / but it's,
 uh, it's been a marvelous experience to live through
 this, these years that I have experienced.

KH: Now dad was a railroader, right?

ES: He worked for the C&O all, more than 50 years
 / KH: Yeah. / and it's, uh, spent his entire
 life on one job, / KH: Huh. / never was transferred
 or layed off or anything / KH: Yeah. / he's
 always been . . .

KH: Now let's see mother and them were little you gave
 them an allowance of sorts. . .

ES: Uh, yes they had 10¢ a week and I'll never forget
 that because, uh, the older girl didn't care much,
 we had a theatre in Milton and, uh, the older girl
 didn't care much about going to the theatre but
 the younger girl saved her 10¢ and, and that was
 before that tax was put in on our dollar, one cent
 on the dollar later and we'd give her that extra
 whenever the tax came up but she went to that
 theatre every Saturday afternoon, she had to see
 the weekly show but, uh, the other girl and we,
 uh, things that we bought were such a luxury,
 every meal we had we raised it ourselves through
 those years when they were small and, uh, they
 always had, they loved to go to the store and
 get salted peanuts and (laughs) cheese they were

a luxury too because we had our own meat and eggs and milk and everything / KH: Yeah. / and you just, uh, we lived good and yet it was, uh, uh, there was a lot of things that the children. . .

KH: Let's see, I know like you use to tell me like when you lived over in town you would come over you'd walk how far to grandma's to help her?

ES: Well I, I lived in town it was about, close to a mi-mile and then I moved up in the country on my father-in-law's farm, my husband and I and it was 3 miles / KH: Um, mmm. / and I came in and did mama's work and I'd walk and carry my little girl through the mud because I / KH: (Laughs). / didn't want her to get her feet dirty. And we would go up there at least two days a week and I walked all the way back to town to church on Sundays / KH: Uh, huh. / and it was, uh, wasn't anything we didn't think anything of it, it was just really, uh, 3 miles didn't mean a thing to me (laughter) I'd just walk it. But now I would almost, uh, uh, well I, I don't know whether I could do it or not (laughter) / KH: Yeah. / Not after all these years but things were, well it sounds like it was rough but it wasn't, we enjoyed it, every bit of it.

KH: Uh, you said, I've heard you talk about skating on the Big Sandy / ES: Yeah. / and everything and I know like we couldn't do that today . . .

ES: There's something different about the seasons, we don't have the ice, I can never forget the winter of 1918 I lived by Mud River here at Milton, froze solid and stayed frozen for seven weeks and you could just skate all up and down this river and I was never able to skate on skates I just wore my shoes out, / KH: (Laughs). / skate on my shoes but my husband did skate on skates / KH: Yeah. / and I have seen him go from here to Yates Crossing or up the river, uh, on skates you know and, but we, we don't have that type winter anymore. You get a pair of skates and you keep um for 3 years

and don't even get to use um / KH: (Laughs). /
 because our ponds even don't freeze over,
 / KH: Yeah. / still waters and of course running
 water, I don't know how long it's been since I've
 seen the little river here at my back door
 / KH: Yeah. / froze over. It has been years and
 I imagine it's, it's just the different in the
 climate that happens through the years / KH: Yeah. /.
 I'm not scientific or to know what hap-, know what,
 how that happened (laughter) but anyway there's
 a complete reverse of what there was when I was
 a girl. We had long hard winters and we enjoyed
 every minute of the snow and the ice and, and it
 was just marvelous to sleigh ride and, uh, and we
 had homemade sleds, we didn't have these fancy
 ones with metal, / KH: (Laughs). / we had homemade
 sleds and sometimes they'd hook a big sled to a
 horse and we'd all get in that big sled and just
 go for a big ride / KH: (Laughs). / and it was
 just, uh, just alot of fun and, uh, and even,
 uh, the methods that we had of working we washed
 on washboards, today I turn on an automatic
 washer / KH: Yeah. / and I know when my mother
 was sick an awful lot and my father when I was,
 uh, twelve I had to do the family washing and
 he bought me the first wringer I ever seen to
 wring my clothes with. And I won't forget that,
 to me that was just something wonderful. I didn't
 dream that I'd live to where I could push a button,
 / KH: (Laughs). / pull out a load of clothes or
 another one to dry that load of clothes but there's
 just so many things that's happened it's hard to
 put it into words.

KH: Well how did all the neighbors react when you got
 this wringer?

ES: Well it was really the talk of the little village,
 we lived in Belcher, Kentucky just below Elkhorn
 City and, uh, children together we'd carry it out
 to the river bank, my brother and I that's where
 I'd do the washing out, when it's pretty weather
 out by the Big Sandy River and we'd, uh, uh, heat
 the water in a big old black kettle out, build a

fire under it and then fill the tubs full of hot water and we'd wash those clothes on the board and there was always enough little boys really interested in that, that wringer that I never had to wring any clothes [KH: (Laughs).] they turn that crank for me and it was just, uh, well you washed your clothes till, uh, you put um in that big black kettle and you boiled um, now you'd never think of that today [KH: (Laughs).] and then you put them back through what we called the boil suds. We washed um again and put um in a clear tinsie and a blue rinse so it took alot of water (laughter) and alot of work and we spent, oh it wouldn't be right now, couple of hours for your washings that you put up two or three loads, but then it took from four to six hours to do your [KH: Hum.] washing because we had a large family, [KH: Oh.] there were seven of us children. And one older daughter was married, I was the oldest girl at home so naturally I [KH: Yeah.] I had to do the hard work (laughter) but, uh, oh there's just so many changes in so many ways that [KH: Yeah.] you can't believe it happened [KH: Um, mmm.] in one lifetime.

KH: Well you said, well like you know when you were small and everything and somebody got a cold or got sick you ju-, could you just yell for a doctor or did you [ES: No, we. . .] go to a doctor . . .

ES: We did home remedies as much as you could and we didn't have telephones even where we lived to call a doctor and my father has gotten on a, a little three wheel that he had, uh, where's there's track off the road and rode to Elkhorn City for the doctor different times when someone and the doctor wouldn't come, uh, that far, three miles [KH: Um, mmm.] so he would get on little, uh, railroad bicycle that they called see and it rode on the rails and he would come to our house even when it was close to a river he would ride that [KH: Um, mmm.]. I'll never forget Dr. Pinson coming to our house when I had pneumonia and dad went after him at two o'clock in [KH: Um, mmm.] the morning and he came back [KH: Huh.]. And he beat dad down

there he got on the railroad ahead of him and he beat dad [KH: (Laughs).] back to our house and he stayed on and [KH: Did he?] uh, huh the rest of the night [KH: Um, mmm.] and then went back after daylight you know [KH: Yeah.]. But now doctors were, uh, very far apart from, uh, Elkhorn City to Shelby there was, oh I suppose it was twenty miles I guess that's with the two doctors up there [KH: Uh, huh.] closest to us but Elkhorn City was the closest one.

KH: Yeah, uh, okay, like you said something once, you know, bout your church you, you had ladies' aid and guild girls. . .

ES: We, our, uh, our ladies' aid was really the heart of the church when I, uh, was growing up [KH: Um, mmm.] they, uh, they furnished an awful lot of the money because money was not, uh, well it wasn't plentiful and, uh, they, the first piano we ever had in Milton Baptist Church was a, a baby grand that the ladies' aid paid for [KH: Um, mmm.]. And they quilted, they did quilts and it wasn't like quilting today for 30 and 40 and 50 dollars they quilted for 3 or 4 dollars, a big quilt [KH: Hum.] and they paid for that piano and we still have it today in our church been refinished to match the. . .

KH: Now is that the one in the same church?

ES: Uh, huh. The baby grand in our sanctuary [KH: Um, mmm.] is the old church that Ma Cline and Miss, Miss Reagan and, uh, uh, Viney Huffman, [KH: Yeah.] you know, Viney Huffman all those old ladies [KH: Hum.], uh, quilted and paid for that piano and it's in our church yet today [KH: Yeah.] and, uh, uh, then later the guild girls were, uh, uh, organized and I was one, the chartered members and it happen to be there was twelve of us [KH: Yeah.] and Mrs. Kincaid came from Huntington and organized a WWG we called it, World Wide Guild Girls, [KH: Um, mmm.] and that was a younger group of girls, women in, or girls really from about 14 to 20 [KH: Um, mmm.] that was interested in mission work and, uh, we had direct,

uh, uh, lines on mission fields. Our guild girl especially took on some Indian reservation work and we quilted / KH: Um, mmm. / little quilts and made baby layettes and things send um directly to our mission workers in the Indian reservation in Oklahoma and the money that we sent was any-, even our foreign missionaries / KH: Um, mmm. / our money was sent directly to that, / KH: Um, mmm. / that missionary and now it has to go through the state and the national and, uh, of course this is better for our modern times but I think we've lost something really in / KH: Um, mmm. / not having that direct touch with our missionaries.

KH: Yeah, now you still what, we still can our own food I know / ES: Um, mmm. / cause I help mommy and you alot . . .

ES: Well we still can food but we freeze so much anymore / KH: (Laughs) yeah. / it's so much easier to put it / KH: Uh, huh. / in the freezer and you don't, uh, raise your own meats anymore / KH: Um, mmm. / much cause it's so easy to go to the supermarkets and buy, you can put it in the / KH: Yeah. / freezer and keep it / KH: Um, mmm. / but I mean / KH: Um, mmm. / it's easier to have it as to, uh, go out and buy fresh and, uh, it's a whole lot different today from what . . .

KH: Was there any like, like in spring or you know late winter and early spring, you know, right at the planting season that you didn't have much meat I mean like when the meat would not keep or did you all . . .

ES: Well, uh, we canned, / KH: Uh, huh. / you won't believe this but we canned ribs like pork ribs we have / KH: (Laughs). / and we canned those and we canned our sausage / KH: Oh. / we didn't have ways of keeping it / KH: Um, mmm. / but then we sugar cured the hams and the shoulders and the sausage / KH: Yeah. / and, uh, that would keep till the next year if you needed. I know one, I, we didn't do it but there was, uh, there was one

old lady I visited once that they, uh, they had wood ashes on their meat now that don't sound very good does it, / KH: No (laughs). / but you'd be surprised what it tasted like / KH: Uh, huh. / They put wood ashes / KH: Um, mmm. / over these hams and shoulders and laid / KH: Uh, huh. / um up on a big meat bench in what they called their smokehouse, / KH: Um, mmm. / is what we all called the house we kept our meat in that's where it's smoked in the spring, you smoked it to keep it you know / KH: Oh, yeah. / and we smoked our own meat what was left over / KH: Um, mmm. / I even sugar cured / KH: Um, mmm. / and then, uh, this old lady had this with wood ashes / KH: Um, mmm. / They'd burn wood and this ashes were sifted and then of course when they started to cook it they trimmed off all that and that was the most beautiful and the best tasting ham I think I ever tasted in my life (laughter) / KH: Oh. / I'll never forget that and she had homemade hominy which was something we made from corn / KH: Yeah. / and I'll never forget the hominy and, and the, / KH: Um, mmm. / and the ham / KH: Um, mmm. / I was visiting down there at Morris Memorial Hospital the other day up here at the convalescent home / KH: Um, mmm. / and the daughter of this old lady is a patient there and she's in her 80's and, uh, uh, she was, uh, up in her years then, the daughter, but she was home when I visited her years and years ago and / KH: Um, mmm. / I reminded her / KH: Uh, huh. / of that ham and hominy that they had the day I was there and (laughter) she said well, " I won't forget it either because I helped to do it," you know, / KH: Yeah. / and. . .

KH: Uh, yeah, like during the depression did you all have trouble like getting sugar or salt or . . .

ES: Now it was, it was rationed they, the government furnished us ration stamps / KH: Um, mmm. / and you could only get what those stamps / KH: Oh. / would let you. You couldn't get bacon we, that raised our own were lucky you could get seasoning in, / KH: Um, mmm. / there was so many pounds / KH: Hum. / allowed for / KH: Oh. / you know. . .

KH: What'd you do when you couldn't get baking powder or something like that?

ES: Well you didn't use alot but I think, I can't remember that it was ever that baking powder and things
 / KH: Uh, huh. / were that scarce / KH: Uh, huh. /
 it was really, uh, butter and lard and, and uh, meat, meats especially. The shoes and clothing was rationed and it'd been you couldn't hardly get towels or sheets or anything / KH: Um, mmm. /
 like that, they were just simply unobtainable unless you had a supply on hand / KH: Yeah. / you know, very few of them came in (child's voice in background) (break in tape). . . is something that we all had to share in / KH: Yeah. / the rich and the poor, everybody / KH: Uh, huh. / was only allowed so much and / KH: Huh. / I know shoes, one family, maybe one person in the family wouldn't wear out very many shoes but a child in school needed an extra shoe stamp so that one that didn't wear out very many they used that shoe stamp to get the other one a pair of shoes (laughter) / KH: Yeah. / And it was things like that really / KH: Um, mmm. /
 I can't remember all the things but I do know that, uh, coffee / KH: Um, mmm. / was something and washing powders was just awful hard to get. It was not rationed / KH: Um, mmm. / with stamps but you could hardly get detergents, uh, you just had to take what come / KH: Um, mmm. / I remember we made alot of our soap at that time / KH: Yeah. / we made / KH: (Laughs). / our own just because we, you could buy the lye and you'd save your bacon drippings and things / KH: Uh, huh. / and you'd make your own, my mother knew how / KH: Um, mmm. / and we, we made our own lye soap to use for, uh, / KH: Um, mmm. / alot of our washing because it was so hard in our area I don't know if that's ever the way it was around here, / KH: Yeah. / uh, it was hard to get, uh, soap to wash with / KH: Um, mmm. / and, uh, we didn't go dirty but (laughter) / KH: Yeah. / but, uh, . .

KH: Like whenever you couldn't get sheets and you really needed um or something like that what'd you have to

do, did you . . .

ES: Uh, I can remember that we bought feed in great big gunnysacks / KH: Um, mmm. / and they sewed four of those sacks together and made a wonderful sheet they were a bit course (laughter) they weren't like these, uh, clean fancy ones we get anymore but you were gla-, and, uh, we were just lucky that we didn't have to, there were very few times but so many people that was just practically all they had / KH: Yeah. / was the sheets made from sacks. And then we got other feeds that were for our cattle in pretty print sacks / KH: Oh. / and we would make dresses out of those / KH: Really. / because materials were just hard to come by / KH: Oh. / because all the, all the plants and factories I think that could / KH: Um, mmm. / were converted to war materials in the second World War and naturally there wasn't alot of textile mills and things / KH: Um, mmm. / going like they would be. And everybody that could was working in these ammunition factories and plants producing / KH: Um, mmm. / for / KH: Yeah. / the front and it's, uh, uh, that was why I guess that there was such a shortage / KH: Um, mmm. / in so many things.

KH: Yeah, did you ever have to weave your own material. . .

ES: No I / KH: . . .spin or anything. / can't remember ours when my own grandmother did / KH: Uh, huh. / she, she carded and spun her w-wool, I've seen her card the wool and then she would spin it on her spinning wheel and she would knit us socks and mittens / KH: Oh. / . When I was a little girl when I started to school I wore hand knit socks that my grandma had knitted for me and I was so proud of them because they were red (laughter) and she knit me some mittens / KH: Uh, huh. / out of red wool to match um and I felt like, my oldest sister was too proud to wear her's she wouldn't wear um and I was, I was thrilled to death with my red socks and red mittens (laughter) but I, I've seen my granny, uh, card and spin her wool and I've seen her she'd dye / KH: Uh, huh. /

with, uh, sometimes it was berries, some berries or
roots, I think mostly it was roots / KH: Um, mmm. /
that they boiled and made this water oh, stain water
I would call / KH: Um, mmm. / it but anyway she
would dye her wool with that and then she'd, but
red seem to be the easiest thing that she ever
could color / KH: Yeah. / but, uh, she was, I
can remember her spinning wheel and I've seen her
weave rugs, she wove my mother's carpets and, uh,
they would weave just yards and yards / KH: Um, mmm. /
and then you just sew um together these strips and
make a rug that would cover the whole floor, your
whole / KH: Um, mmm. / wall to wall carpet, but
/ KH: (Laughs). / it was made out of, uh, woven
carpet on grandma's loom, / KH: Uh, huh. / she
had an old rug loom and, uh, I can remember that
being in a building up over the cellar on the farm
back home / KH: Yeah. / but, uh, we, that's just
about all that I can think of right now.

KH: Okay, thank you alot.