

Interviewee: Lynn Rhodes  
Interviewer: Jessica Taylor  
Date: June 15, 2013  
Project: TMP-005

T: This is Jessica Taylor interviewing Lynn Rhodes on June 15, 2013 at four o'clock p.m. Can you please state your full name including your middle?

R: Lynn N. Rhodes.

T: N?

R: N.

T: Okay.

R: I was born here. I grew up in the Courthouse, and then we moved just out of town past Dominion. I resided there until I went away to school in the seventh grade. Then I lived in South Carolina for a few years and then I came back here, been here even since.

T: Okay.

R: Being born in 1948.

T: 1948. When specifically did you move back from South Carolina?

R: [19]76.

T: [19]76. So you were gone for how many years?

R: Oh I was- went away to school, and I was here for the summers.

T: Oh, okay. Where did you go to school?

R: Miller School.

T: Miller's?

R: Miller School, outside of Charlottesville.

T: Oh, okay.

R: You're not going to use all of that, are you?

T: It's there. It's on there-

R: Okay.

T: -forever. So what are your parents' names and occupations?

R: My father's name was G. Sinclair Rhodes, and he owned the Gloucester Men's Shop, and then he was a third-generation sheriff here in the county.

T: Wow.

R: My mother's name was Merwin, M-E-R-W-I-N, G. Rhodes. She was a teacher here for many years.

T: Okay. Okay. What school did she teach at?

R: She taught at Botetourt and then she taught at T.C. Walker, and then at Page School.

T: Okay. Do you have any siblings?

R: I have one older brother, George-

T: Okay.

R: -who you may have met.

T: Not yet. How many years separate you two?

R: He was born in January of [19]47; I was born in February of [19]48. So, one year.

T: Okay.

R: Just barely.

T: As for you, what is or was your occupation?

R: I was a stock helper with Dominion, worked in the storeroom. I ended up on the paid Fire and Rescue, paid Fire- I mean, paid rescue squad here.

T: Where is that located?

R: Right up the street-

T: Okay.

R: -on the right.

T: Where is Gloucester Men's Shop located?

R: It was two-story green building down just a little further on the left. It has weaving supplies, bolts of cloth and weaving material and stuff.

T: Just up here?

R: It's the Arts on Main, and it's what used to be the barber shop, and then the two-story building was my dad's dry cleaning place.

T: Oh, okay. So pretty much the entire time you've been in Gloucester, you've been on Main Street?

R: Yeah.

T: Where specifically did your family reside?

R: Well, when they moved from the Courthouse, they resided off of Fiddlers Green Road in Gloucester.

T: Okay. So relatively nearby?

R: Yeah, it's about a half mile up there. No, it's actually a mile from Gloucester Men's Shop there.

T: Okay. Okay. You've definitely lived in this area the entire time.

R: Yeah.

T: So what's your earliest memory of Main Street?

R: Well, years ago they had parallel- angled parking- angled parking on both sides. It was a real circus to watch people back out adjacent to each other, and you just

know they're going to hit in the middle. [Laughter] Now, that was the only road through town, and the convoys would come through town and they would go on forever and ever, it seemed like, when you're a little kid. I don't know if they did it on purpose or not, but they ended up backfiring real loud. See, they had reserve tanks: if you cut one tank off it starts backfiring and then they'd cut the other tank on, I believe. If you're a little kid walking down the street, they wanted to make sure it backfired. [Laughter] Yeah.

T: That's wonderful. Did your family come to this gas station often?

R: No.

T: No.

R: No. Well, he dealt primarily with the ones right next to him. There were two gas stations right next to him, and he had his own gas pump in the back.

T: Wow. Which one was that? Which gas station was it at that time?

R: It was a Ford gas station right next to him which that sold, I think it was Amoco gas. Then there was a Dodge place this side of that.

T: Okay. So that's where he would have gone because it's the closest.

R: Yeah. The Ford place had a parts department, which all the parts for cars and other things were pretty standard back then. Even parts for some of the dry cleaning equipment, the guy would write the number down and says, don't tell anybody, but go next door. You can get the same bearing from them a whole lot cheaper than you can get it through the company.

T: Wow. That's- that's some loyalty right there, actually.

R: Yeah.

T: Wow.

R: At the top of the steps was a switch, like a light switch, and it blew the siren for the fires. There was a fire siren behind the fire house, and one behind the old movie theater, which was where the bowling alley is. Dad used to be president of the Fire Company, and of course, there was a couple of places in town that you would call to report a fire, and they'd go up there and blow the siren. If the fire was in the Courthouse, you'd blow it three times. Of course, you had no other way of communicating, and you could actually hear that siren in Bellamy, where I lived for a while as an adult. On a clear day, the wind would carry the sound over there. And then, somebody would telephone the fire house and tell them where the fire was, and he wrote it down on the chalkboard. They didn't have all the modern communications back then. Even when I joined the Fire Company, we were still riding on the back of the trucks to and from fires in long coats and hip boots and helmets. Yeah.

T: You're coming at it from the perspective of the Fire Company. What sort of, I guess, technology- how has it changed over time there?

R: Everybody has a monitor, and you get fire tones or rescue tones or both, and it's got a repeater button on it so if you don't hear it the first time, hit the button and it repeats it. It gives you very clear instructions-

T: Okay.

R: -and the house numbers have helped so much. Everybody has a volume with all the house numbers: streets, names, and everything.

T: Okay. What kind of fire trucks were they driving at first when you first remember it?

R: Old ones.

T: Okay. [Laughter]

R: Sometimes they would have an old oil truck that they used for a tanker, but keep in mind water's heavier than oil, so you had to- is that right? Water's heavier than oil? Oil sinks to the bottom. Anyway, whatever. We still always had some pretty decent equipment there.

T: Yeah.

R: I wasn't around when they had the hose reels they would run down the road with, and hook up to the fire hoses.

T: Okay.

R: Years ago, they had a bunch of these solar-operated fire sensors, and Happy Morgan was the pharmacist at Morgan's Drugstore, the one that was up the street. He loaded the car up with them to go to a house fire one time. We rounded a curb, they all fell over, and discharged in the backseat of his car.  
[Laughter]

T: Oh wow. So where did the fire station get its gas?

R: Mostly in my day, it was out back out of the tank. [Laughter] Texaco.

T: Texaco. You might have ordered it through this gas station?

R: Well, Captain Brown owned the Texaco station.

T: Right.

R: Andy James was a fire chief for many years, and he operated the place down there and supplied the company with fuel.

T: Right. Makes sense. It's a small world.

R: Yeah.

T: Okay. Even though you didn't come- Oh, you were going to say something.

R: Well, back in the [19]50s, you know, daffodils was a money crop. Trailways and Greyhound buses going through here twice a day on each side of the street. You could book a bus anywhere in the country, and you could catch a bus to Richmond, you could walk a block and get on the other. Of course, normally, they didn't both go to the same little towns. They shipped a gang of daffodils out of here in the belly of the buses, and that was a cash crop back years ago.

T: That's a good memory.

R: Yeah. They'd pay school kids two or three cents a bunch to pick them. I never picked them though. [Laughter]

T: When you were in school, did you have a car?

R: No. Going to elementary school up here, Mom started teaching again in the fourth grade. We rode with her, and when we got older we could ride the bicycle. It's funny: there was an old wooden gymnasium out there, near where the gym is now up here. I can remember them giving out polio shots.

T: Wow.

R: It was Dr. Tabb, the old doctor that was across the street from the fire house in that big house. He had a little office out back. And Raymond Brown. Dr. Brown had just come here. The old wooden gym had a balcony on both sides, and had

a coal-fired furnace. Reason I know that is, my Dad had borrowed coal once in a blue moon from them. That's where we first got our polio shots.

T: Wow.

R: Nobody knew, and people did come down with polio.

T: Yeah.

R: We had played with a cousin in Goochland during the weekend, and first of the week they called and said their daughter had come down with polio. Of course, everybody was scared to death. If I recall correctly, we were put on Geritol—liquid, nasty Geritol—three times a day. For the luck of God, we never got it. My brother and I never got polio.

T: That's great.

R: Yeah.

T: That's wonderful. I'm not sure how to transition from polio to cars.

R: Cars. Cars were [Laughter] basically two tones: they went from either blue or black, with red cars being on the East coast. Then they went to, basically, two-tone. When my dad was sheriff-ing, he could pick up a young man and park on 17, and he could tell you the make and model of the car probably to here, and who was driving it.

T: Wow.

R: They just didn't change. The styles stayed pretty much the same, and that was—you can't do that now.

T: Yeah. What make and model did your family have?



R: I know we had an old two-door coupe at one time. Pop had some panel trucks in the business. We had some Chevrolets over the years, and we finally had an automatic car. I learned to drive with a shift, three-speed, with a column and a clutch. When I went away to school, some of the boys couldn't drive anything but automatic. Then, the air conditioners started creeping into the county- the cars with air conditioning. Most places didn't have it.

T: Yeah. You didn't go to high school here; you went to high school in Charlottesville.

R: Yes.

T: When you were in Charlottesville, did you happen to notice who got cars first? Did you notice that some of the high school kids got them at sixteen and then other kids got it at eighteen?

R: Some of them could borrow cars on weekends. Of course, eventually they would work during the summer and buy one themselves, but they couldn't have any on the hill where we went to school. I drove- we utilized some on weekends if you had a friend that had one.

T: So where would you go if you had a friend that had one?

R: Well, we rode around Main Street, doing what most guys like to do.

T: Which is what?

R: We were always looking for girls. [Laughter] There was a little bit of- [Laughter] involved.

T: How old were you when this was happening? Are you going to say- are you going to tell me like twelve?

R: No. I wasn't that young.

T: Thirteen?

R: Fifteen, sixteen.

T: Fifteen, sixteen? Okay. At the age you would be learning how to drive anyway.

R: Yeah.

T: Who taught you how to drive?

R: Well, I learned pretty much on my own, up there in the woods, in and out of the garage, or out the circle up and down.

T: Okay.

R: I never had a learner's permit. You came down the street and took the driving test and then you had to do parallel parking. The hardest thing was when you went down Main Street, it's not one way. Of course, I wasn't used to driving on anything that wide. [Laughter]

T: Makes sense.

R: Yeah.

T: So in your time on Main Street here, who did you notice coming in and out of this particular service station?

R: Good question. I don't have a lot of recollection.

T: Okay.

R: You know, not going to school here from the seventh grade on-

T: Right.

R: -didn't know a lot of the guys unless I'd been in school with them.

T: Yeah.

R: I had no reason to come this far down the street.

T: Sure.

R: Well, see, eventually we had the grocery store over there, and Colonial Store moved up here. We used to go to the old movie theater over here that had the columns in the front. Fascinating with all the bottle caps on the ground instead of rocks.

T: Oh.

R: The old [inaudible 17:27] machines.

T: Oh. Wow.

R: A lot of the movies were still black and white in those years.

T: What was the first movie you saw in the movie theater? Is that hard?

R: Yeah. We had been known to go to the drive-in, down the road.

T: Where's that?

R: You know where Ace Hardware is, off old 17? Before you get there on the right. Of course, you had separate sides, too. You follow me?

T: Mm-hm.

R: I was actually old enough to date and go down there some. Of course, the mosquitos will pick you dry. [Laughter]

T: That's a good place you can take girls on dates.

R: Yeah.

T: Okay, and you would have been in college or summers in high school?

R: Summers.

T: Summers.

- R: In high school. It used to be, before you had a drivers' license, the skating rink down here was the place to go on Friday night. If you had a girl and you skate around next to her, you were doing something! [Laughter]
- T: That's wonderful. Someone else was telling me about sock hops. Was that after your time or before your time?
- R: I had always heard of them.
- T: You heard of them, but not your thing?
- R: No. They had one dance- you know where the doctor's office is right up here on the other side of the ABC store? They had a dance upstairs there. I went to it.
- T: Yeah?
- R: Did a lot of looking. [Laughter]
- T: Uh oh. UH OH. Okay, so to be safe, I'm going to focus on the gas station for a second. If you were looking at it from the outside, when you were in elementary school before you left in the [19]50s, how does it look different than what it looks like right now?
- R: No gas pumps. [Laughter]
- T: Okay. You got me on that one. How about the colors-
- R: Oh, the colors are pretty original.
- T: Okay.
- R: Of course, you heard about the island they added on out there and the roof got knocked off.
- T: Right.
- R: And you heard about the bathrooms that were on the side.

T: Well, tell me about that.

R: They had like a screened porch, and if I recollect correctly, there was two bathrooms in there. Back then, people travelled. It was nothing to pull over to the side of the road and have a picnic lunch. There weren't any Burger Kings, McDonalds, or anything. There were places on the side of old 17 and other routes that had regular pull-offs and picnic tables. This was a- must have been an ace in the hole for some people, because you've got the bathrooms right there and a screened-in porch. You could sit at the picnic table out there and eat.

T: Did the other gas stations have that?

R: No.

T: No.

R: No. I think they had drink machines on this side at one time. There might even still be a little cement pad out there.

T: Oh. Do you remember what kind of drinks it was? Was it Coke? Was it Pepsi?

R: Well, we bottled the Cokes here, so I'm sure they had Cokes.

T: Makes sense.

R: Probably **Lehigh's** or something.

T: Okay. All right.

R: Probably had one of those grape sodas.

T: Okay.

R: Ginger ale maybe. Golden ginger ale.

T: I didn't even know that existed.

R: Well, I never drank too many nickel Cokes. They used to pick us up- somebody would walk us over to the Dodge, Chrysler-Dodge, and hold you up, and you had to shove the door up. You could pull out the small bottles.

T: Wow.

R: Cokes for a nickel. Then, there was a salesman who would walk us down to Morgan's drugstore—it was up there—and buy a milkshake- a big, tall milkshake- for a quarter.

T: Wow.

R: They would split it in half for my brother and I, which you had to get permission from my mother to do that.

T: Right.

R: That was tall [inaudible 21:47]. The first time, when they were building the house of there, a salesman came up there and we were playing out in the yard. He asked, can I give the boys a peppermint stick? That's when they came in wooden- I mean, little boxes. Mom said, sure, but they probably won't know what it is. We thanked them and ran out and dug in the sand pile with them. We didn't get candy or Cokes growing up; very rarely did we ever get a piece of gum. When we came to Richmond, there was two big department stores: Thalhimers and Miller & Rhoads. One of them had the old traditional parking garage where they parked the cars. You could hear them squealing as they go up- the tires squealing. They had these bubble gum machines. They'd get us some—they looked like Chiclets--out of there. By God, you had to dispose of that in a napkin or something. They wouldn't let you spit it out anywhere. [Laughter]

T: How many times a week did you end up at the drugstore?

R: That was far and few between back then.

T: Yeah?

R: Now they did have a peanut machine: hot, roasted peanuts with a turntable. I watched all of the people go through there, and just get a handful and go down there shucking them. It turned out they didn't sell as many as they wanted to because people ate a handful free every day. [Laughter]

T: Did the gas stations have these same kind of amenities that the drugstores had?  
No.

R: They had some bottled drinks and maybe some cakes.

T: Cakes.

R: Little sweet cakes.

T: Like shipped in from somewhere or made by somebody?

R: Yeah. Shipped in. [Inaudible 23:40] Bread was one of the most well-known breads in that time. You could find them in just about every store: every country store, every big store. They sold a little loaf of bread. This was when people worked construction jobs; you could go in there and get this little cake of bread and a couple of slices of baloney, couple of slices of the hoop cheese for practically nothing back then. Some of them swear that little loaf of bread was still warm from cooking when it got here. [Laughter]

T: That's a nice thought.

R: You know, the sawdust floors- back when they had the butcher shop, it had sawdust floors and the old wooden butcher blocks in the middle. They would cut

the meat up, and when you got lunchmeats, they sliced it off of a loaf of lunchmeat. It always had a label on the bottom, and when my brother and I got older, we'd make each other lunch rather than eat what they had at the cafeteria. It started by accident: the one that had the bottom slice had the label in it. You start eating that and you're chewing on something but it won't chew good.

[Laughter] So then it got to be a sport to put that in. [Laughter]

T: Wait- where was the meat from?

R: Martin's. J. Martin and Company. That was between the existing SunTrust Bank and the antique store. It was two-story building, and it had a narrow wing on the right, and it had hardware. And on the left side, they had your groceries, and there were steps that went upstairs and there were some piece goods. **Olan Mills** would come up and set up a studio up there. He had two rooms on the right, a waiting room. They had a speaker system, where you speak into the system and put the money in what looked like a juice can. You talk to them downstairs and tell them how much you rang up, and send the money downstairs and they'd put the right change into it and send it back up. When my dad was younger, as a young man, he worked for Mr. Martin and he lived in the back upstairs.

T: Wow. Was that common for an employee to live in the same building?

R: Probably not, but the opportunity was there. I think the other man that lives down Ware Neck is still alive.

T: What would be his name?

R: Oh, you would have to ask me. [Laughter] It might come to me. But anyway.



T: I'll try something else. How many times a year did you go to Richmond, those big department stores?

R: There was a time when my dad would go up there about every couple of weeks to pick up supplies for the dry cleaning.

T: Wow.

R: Sometimes, Mom and my brother and I would go with him. Of course, they dropped one more and Mom off, and sometimes I rode with Dad to go to the factories to pick up some supplies. I know Hanes Underwear was one place they would go to pick up things.

T: What's the point of taking kids with you on an errand like that?

R: No babysitters. We don't need a babysitter, and apparently we were out of diapers and potty-trained. [Laughter]

T: [Laughter] Fair enough. What about Newport News and Williamsburg- places like that?

R: There was a time when you had to go to **Hylton** Village to a veterinarian, and we did ride that ferry on occasion. The thing that impressed me was the pilings that were all in a bundle, and they brushed up against it and rolled back and forth.

The last day the ferry ran when the bridge opened, Benny Lee—that lives right down the road here—was down there in this cowboy uniform: hat and shirt and pants and guns. The wind blew his hat in the water. It was very traumatic.

[Laughter]

T: Wow. The bridge did change what's accessible, right? Did you find that after it was built it was immediately used a lot more?

R: They had no choice. The ferry quit running.

T: That's true.

R: And people always commuted to work, even though they paid- they had tickets, but the average person had to pay seventy-five cents each way. I will tell you, a lot of houses were built off of that. You could buy the ticket for- I don't know whether it was thirty or forty-five cent or something. Occasionally, you had somebody that would swap a ticket- you know, everybody was going through there giving you a dollar, and you'd give them the change- you know, a quarter-back. Then when you rung it up, you rung up a ticket. Then you put the ticket in the drawer and pocket the rest. That was the system. It wasn't all of them that worked down there that did that, of course, but it was one or two of them that worked down there. When a house only cost four or five thousand dollars to build, in the amount of traffic across there you can see it wouldn't take too many years-

T: No.

R: -to save enough money to build it.

T: Yeah. Wow. In that sense, you do lose some enterprises when you bring in technological innovation, right?

R: Yeah. Now, people still run the tolls. There was something in the paper—news-- more than I had anticipated.

T: Interesting.

R: They still run the tolls.

T: That's odd. So in the Courthouse area, do you move by foot or by car most often?

R: Now?

T: Then.

R: Oh. Well, it was nothing to walk down a street.

T: Yeah.

R: When we were old enough, they'd allow us to either walk or ride a bicycle down the street. There wasn't anything that was taking you down the street, unless, of course, you wanted to go down the street. That was unheard of. Mom went down the street basically once a week to buy groceries, and then we'd go to church. If she needed milk or bread, Pop brought it home because there the store was across the street.

T: Right. Exactly.

R: Yeah.

T: Okay.

R: I mean, it wasn't no such thing as joyriding for us back then.

T: Yeah. So, your grandparents' generation—I know that's way—yeah, but did you—did they have cars?

R: Well, Granddaddy was sheriff.

T: Right.

R: When they rationed gas and stuff during the war—or tires—he said, that's all right. I can jack the car up and stay home. [Laughter] They got him tires.

T: Wow.

R: There was a gas pump sitting on the other side of the court green, on the other side. There was a gas pump just inside the wall, where he'd pump gas in the car.

T: Wow. I didn't think about this, but how did the war affect gas stations here?

R: That was before my day.

T: Right.

R: But they had gas rationing cards. You just couldn't get all the gas you wanted. If you were a farmer, it might have been a little- there were exceptions made for farmers. Then there were black market rationing cards that my dad was offered some one time, and he didn't, wouldn't take them.

T: Why not?

R: Well, it wasn't here- it was in Goochland. The guy offered him some.

T: Oh.

R: A relative by marriage offered him some.

T: Oh.

R: I'm sure I know he didn't take it.

T: Is the grandparents' generation- the one that kind of predates the war- are they more likely to walk Main Street?

R: No. They lived at the end of Fiddlers' Green Road, so they wouldn't have walked anywhere.

T: Okay.

R: It wasn't nothing unusual to catch one of the boys and give them—what—a dime or a nickel back then to go to town and get them a pack of cigarettes, but they'd better hustle back. [Laughter] I've heard my dad talk about that.

T: Define a 'boy' for me.

R: Oh! Teenager or younger.

T: Okay. Just a kid that you would know?

R: Well, there were- my dad a number- two sisters and a few brothers. He'd catch hold of the first one, says, here. Go get me a pack of cigarettes and beat your feet on back. You know, there were paths through the woods and the road.

T: Okay.

R: I think there was a place just up 17 a while that sold cigarettes.

T: Oh.

R: On the left, just a little old- a little old black store.

T: A black store?

R: Yeah, that might have been the closest place they could go to get cigarettes.

T: Where would that have been? On 17 and what?

R: Just up 17 a little bit.

T: Okay. And you said it was a black-owned business?

R: Yeah.

T: Okay. That's really interesting.

R: Now, in the Courthouse here, across from where you were digging, there was a florist back there. On the other side of the street, there was a black dry cleaners and a barber shop. And then the black motel was in the back.

T: Do you remember the names of any of those?

R: Watkins.

T: Watkins was the-

R: I think it was Watkins.

T: -was the name of the motel?

R: Yeah. I think it was all owned by the same person.

T: Oh, really?

R: Yeah. They sold a lot of flowers and corsages and stuff. I know Mom patronized them some. In later years, they actually put out of town crews for the Fire Company up in there. They were nice, clean places. I don't know why, but I had the opportunity to go down and examine them, and that was probably the only black dry cleaners or barbershop right here. They had some down the road, now.

T: What was their clientele like? Was it both white and black?

R: Probably mostly blacks.

T: That makes sense. So you wouldn't see a black-owned business on this part of Main Street?

R: Well, you didn't.

T: Yeah. Is that just the way it was, or can you identify a specific reason?

R: It's probably just the way it was. Now, when you go down past Page School, there was a beauty parlor and dry cleaners and **Stokes'** Tavern. They were hopping, baby. They were hopping. It was only a two-lane road, and Papa's had me go down there and get them to move the cars because the parking lots were full and they were crowding the road. My grandfather was called down there a couple times when he was sheriff-ing, and the last time he went down there he asked Mr. Stokes, who's going to run this place: you or me? And the guy says,

why? and Granddaddy told him, if I'm going to run it, I'm going to close her down.

[Laughter] I don't think he ever called him again.

T: Wow. Wow.

R: The funniest thing, is he had a building out back and when I was working for Dominion, I was reading meters there for a while. You go around back, and he's going home in a bathrobe. He says, I got me a shower out back. And he says, I make the biggest mess out there I can and wife won't fuss at me. [Laughter]

T: So your father and your grandfather were both men of the law. That's really interesting, the idea that it's so crowded around these black businesses that you have to move people.

R: Well, there was nothing out there back then.

T: Right.

R: My great-great-grandfather was killed in the line of duty as a sheriff in, I think it was, Tyler, Texas.

T: Wow.

R: He was shot. He rode up to the house to arrest a horse thief, and they shot him through the window and killed him.

T: Wow. That's in Texas, you said?

R: Yeah. My great-grandmother and her family- two daughters and two boys- went to Fort Union to live with relatives. The two boys ended up living down this way. I think one lived with a Doctor **Broadus**. I don't know how old the boys were when they got here, but they both ended up working in Saluda for the telephone,

telegram company. Then Granddaddy started game warden and eventually was deputy down here.

T: Okay.

R: But you didn't have but one-type sheriff and maybe one, maybe two deputies at the most back then.

T: Right.

R: Had to furnish your own car, your own gun. [Laughter]

T: That's pretty different from now. So on Main Street, what kind of business does your dad run into?

R: He ran the dry cleaners and he sold men's clothing.

T: Right, but as sheriff. I meant your granddad, I'm sorry.

R: Well, it was pretty much the same when he was sheriff-ing.

T: Yeah?

R: Now, back in Granddaddy's day, court day used to be a big thing. There were horse and buggies lined up all the way down to the Catholic Church, and everywhere you can think of. People swapped lies and traded wares and sold horses and horse traded and all that back years and years ago. Then, when Granddaddy was here, court day wasn't that big a thing.

T: Why not?

R: Well, everybody had radio and TV by then. [Laughter]

T: What did your grandparents tell you about this place as they knew it?

R: Well, that's a good question. I used to ride around with him a little bit when he was sheriff-ing. He'd ride down to Clay Bank way out on this pier, and talk on



what looked like a telephone to somebody. Reception was good down there. But as far as talking to him- he used to stop at so many old country stores and talk to somebody. He actually got locked in the jail there in the circle one time. The clerk of court, B.B. Roane, used to be clerk of court, I think was what the name was. Anyway, Granddaddy saw him coming back from his house—that's where the lawyer's office is, next to the church now—and asked him to, come in here and get me out of jail. [Laughter] He'd probably told him something in four-letter words that he could rot in there, as a joke. He did let him out.

T: There was never really any trouble in this area?

R: Well, they were always going after bootleggers and doing the usual-

T: Where do bootleggers live?

R: Well, they would set up stills in different places.

T: And he would just go bust them?

R: Yeah.

T: That's noble.

R: My granddaddy actually shot a guy one time. He said the guy was running and he just kind of shot in his direction. The guy quit and came on back, and when he put him against the car to handcuff him, he noticed he was nicked in the side.

[Laughter]

T: Wow. Oh my gosh. Oh my goodness.

R: Of course, I don't remember any of that.

T: Right. Do you remember any of the bars or the watering holes, as Ronnie Stubblefield called them?

R: There was one across the street there. When I first saw it, it had outhouses behind it. There was a building in the back that looked like the top of a Dutch windmill. We asked our mother what it was, and she said, it used to be a windmill. I tried to get Billy DeHardit to research that when he was still capable. He's dead now. He ran the Glo-Quips. To try to do some research on it. That's what I think my mother had told me. But, watering holes. The Courthouse Restaurant sold beer in there. Unfortunately, they had a daughter that wasn't quite right, and she'd sit out in the car all day, and sometimes he'd get mad.

T: Oh, my gosh.

R: But anyway. There was another- oh, Pat Wynn showed up on the curb there where the Mexican restaurant was. I can't tell you how old that was. Further down the road where Danny's Glass is, there was a place you could go in there and buy apparently a meal and beer. There's probably places I have left out.

T: That's okay. Did you notice as the number of cars in the county or in the state increased, more people were coming from outside of Gloucester to Gloucester? Maybe on the weekends for fun?

R: Well, a lot of times we didn't- we didn't come out. [Laughter]

T: [Laughter] Okay.

R: We stayed up there in the woods and played, but we had to come out when Mom went to the store because she wouldn't have left us at home back then. We just weren't real knowledgeable. But it was the main hub. You had to go through Gloucester if you were going anywhere.

T: That makes sense. So you wouldn't leave for a weekend or anything with your family except for Richmond?

R: Well, we went to her home in Goochland, and we seemed to always go up and spend the night. Of course, Mom and Dad were married for ten years without any children, and they used to walk down to the movies, and they used to walk through the woods to play golf. They burned the roads up to Goochland, too. When Mom went up there for a week, Pop would write her letters. [Laughter] You don't think he'd pick up a phone to call her; that costs money. [Laughter] He'd write her a letter.

T: Wow. That's really something.

R: We ran across letters that were up in the attic; where he wrote- he wrote home during the war, and they censored all your mail. We never read the whole thing, but Mom would write- or he would- my dearest darling, and I just couldn't bring myself to reading them, you know?

T: Yeah. Wow.

R: He was in the Army for three years, I guess.

T: Absolutely. Wow.

R: World War II. He was a mess sergeant in the hospitals in England.

T: Wow.

R: Being born in 1911, he had some age on him when they drafted him. They drafted—what's his name—a Grey man that a year older than him. Lewis Grey. And he got out- out of going in because his family farm. But you know, when they're getting the older people-

T: Yeah.

R: -they're scraping.

T: Yeah. Wow.

R: He got out of some of the basic training. I don't think he had to do all the running and stuff in there. They asked him did he want to be a butcher or a baker.

[Laughter] He traveled across the country several times by train. Got out, he went in in Richmond. Go around 295 on the right side, there's a whole complex of buildings that look different. That's where he went in. He got out in Washington—Seattle, Washington, or somewhere up there—and had to come back. [Laughter]

They sent most of his money home to Mom. Because she was running the business for him, see, he didn't need it.

T: Yeah.

R: But being married, they sent the money home.

T: Oops. That's really funny. We touched on it really briefly, but I was wondering within the context of Main Street specifically in the [19]50s and [19]60s, how did segregation work? Were there a lot of black people that came down to do grocery shopping or that kind of thing, get gas, get their car fixed? Did your dad have black patrons?

R: He had some black patrons. What's the lawyer's name?

T: T.C. Walker?

R: T.C. Walker was a patron. He dealt with him.

T: Wow.

R: We had a black doctor by the name of Dr. Turner. He had a horrible accent, but he had some black clientele.

T: Okay.

R: Now, probably most of them went to the black dry cleaners, so there's one in the Courthouse and one in White Marsh. To tell you the truth, I don't remember seeing that many in the grocery stores. I just don't remember seeing that many; I might be wrong, but they had somewhere else to shop, I guess.

T: Yeah.

R: I mean, I don't think it's a place where they wouldn't wait on them. I can't imagine that about the restaurants, because we never ate out much. But I'm sure they didn't go in Sutton's up here. The one beside Tri-County was run by B.C. Sutton. I'm just about sure they wouldn't go in there, or any other places and eat.

T: That makes sense.

R: Yeah. They just probably wouldn't wait on them.

T: Yeah. Makes sense. I mean, it's the time.

R: We did eat a couple of times at Sewell's Ordinary growing up. Mom, of course, made us learn how to cut the chicken up with a knife and fork instead of picking it up and eating it. [Laughter] She tried to instill table manners, and of course when we went somewhere like that we had to use them.

T: Yeah.

R: But we didn't eat out much. Once in a blue moon. Pop liked to eat at home. That might speak high of Mom and her cooking, though. [Laughter] Of course, when

they were courting and first married they would eat out some, going to West Point and get something to eat.

T: Really? West Point?

R: Yeah.

T: Wow. So when they're out together on Main Street and they're shopping, what are the different roles of men and women?

R: Pop didn't shop back then. Mom would shop.

T: So it's just women in grocery stores?

R: Yeah. Now, if we needed bread or milk, of course he would pick a loaf up. Emma Jane's store was on the corner across from them, this side of the *Gazette-Journal*, and he knew her from the get-go probably. At Christmastime, he'd call her, will you wrap something up there for me to pick up. [Laughter] Christmas Eve he'd send me down there, because I always liked to hang out with Pop. Go down there and pick a package up and bring it home. If it didn't- wrong color, wrong size- Mom had no problem taking it back. She shopped in there, so they had a pretty good idea of what she wanted. [Laughter]

T: Wow.

R: We had two or three department-store like things in the Courthouse, and you had a great selection. You had Doswell Dutton Hardware Store up there, which is just the other side of the produce market in the bigger building. If you bought this bottle of water today, and went in there next week, they'd have another one sitting there. It's not like Wal-Mart. You buy that pair of glasses the next week, you've got to wait till next year for another one. [Laughter] You had a couple of

hardware stores, you had a Western Auto store—I don't know how they all stayed in business. The Western Auto sold-

T: Absolutely.

R: -guns and ammunition and stuff. Even Doswell Dutton's store sold stuff. He had a freight depot he ran in the back. I won't mention the store, but one of the stores went to West Point- his trucks went to West Point just about every day. And that's where the ABC Store was. So, they brought a certain amount of booze back into the county. I'm sure they had regular customers that they sold it to, or bought it for them.

T: Wow.

R: You know, there's so much that I have no clue about.

T: That's okay. Do you have children, grandchildren?

R: Yeah, both.

T: What do you tell your children and your grandchildren about Gloucester? A Gloucester that they never knew, that existed before they were born?

R: Mine live out of town, and I'll just relate different places and different times and things that happened as I think about it, going through town. But, it was a simpler, slower pace back then. Of course, the cars didn't have air conditioning, the houses didn't have air conditioning. I would really miss that now.

T: That's right. What are your favorite anecdotes to tell them?

R: Well, there's a gentleman who's passed on a number of years ago, and was carrying a blackout during the war. He was staying at the building on the corner that's not there anymore. He got out and walking down the other side of Main

Street, and he fell up the steps at the bank and got up, brushed himself off, and went ahead, fell down the steps on the other side. You know what a blackout is, during the war? The story went that he got disoriented and ended up across the street at the hotel and had to check in there for the night. [Laughter] During the war—Now, I'm not using any names.

T: Right.

R: So I don't know if it's any- I don't think he had any children. He delivered butter and milk and eggs, and during the war there was a shortage of men. He picked up the nickname, as Old Butterdick. [Laughter] When Mom was living in the upstairs apartment, there was a Lamberth Building Materials down the road. They would cut and mill their own wood, and had all the building for houses. Anyway, he would knock, come upstairs in the apartment all alone with my mother, while she described what she wanted him to build. They built this beautiful cabinet, with the teacups in the top and the grooves in the back to put the plates. But he would not go up there without a third person, because he didn't want no scuttlebutt regardless. The hotel over there: there were some sisters that ran it, and I understand they had some regular callers.

[INTERRUPTION IN INTERVIEW]

There were some regular male callers [Laughter] that came by there. Of course, this was- the information was handed down to me, and I just assume it to be the truth.

T: Well, there's that.

R: I paid attention to some of the things they told me. [Laughter]



T: Do you remember anything specific about the gas station, this one here?

R: Just the belts that hung on the wall, basically. Of course, they had a big selection of belts, but we talked about that earlier. And they had the long ones down to the short ones. They had one of the better selections in the county, I think. I don't remember a whole lot else about it. No.

T: That's good enough for me.

R: The ones up in the Courthouse there on the left- Pop had a little grease can, and he'd send me to go out the back door and into there and ask somebody to fill it up with grease. I was a little kid, I was nervous, but we used to hang around the garages, and the people were nice. The guy took the can and said he'd do it. He said, how do you think I'm going to get that grease in that can? He scooped it out of this big barrel and put it in the can, wiped his hand off and put the top on, gave it back to me. I said, thank you. [Laughter]

One other interesting thing. They had the stores on either one side of the road or the other, and if a truck made the last delivery here, they'd dump the dry ice out, down at the store. You don't ever see that anymore; you can buy it. The dry ice is good. If you park your car over here in the yard, have a tick infestation, get the dry ice and break it up and scatter it around, and they will-

T: Wow.

R: But don't touch it. It will burn you. Freeze your hand to death.

T: Wow.

R: But you'd go play out back, and you'd see the kind of steam rising off the little pieces that were left. And milk- they used to deliver the milk to the house, and the

parents would open the bottle and had the cream that rose to the top. That was for their coffee. You weren't getting that. [Laughter]

T: That's wonderful.

R: And the coffee. They always had to grind the eight o'clock coffee. Smelt so good.

T: [Laughter] You're making me hungry. Do you have anything to ask? No?

R: Of course, one of my earliest memories was the road by Fiddlers Green Road was still dirt. Pop would pull us down there on a sleigh and scoot us down the road when he went to get the paper, which you had to walk out all the way out to 17 to get the newspaper.

T: Wow. Wow.

R: Of course, you had boys that had the bicycle route in town here, and they'd ride the bicycle out and deliver the papers.

T: Wow.

R: And the funniest thing, you had Morgan's Drugstore on the left side of the street and Grey's Drugstore on the right. And the buses came, and if either one of them [knocks on table] especially Morgan's Drugstore, was out of a prescription, they'd call next door. They'd send a boy out the back, go down the back street, go across the street, come up and go in the back door, pick up the bottle, retrace his steps, and they'd put it in their own bottle and take it to the counter.

T: Wow.

R: That was funny.

T: That is pretty ridiculous. [Laughter] Do you have anything else you want to add?

R: I remember the airplanes with the banners back in the early years, saying there was a circus in town.

T: Really?

R: I remember that. You had to go to Southern States over here to buy the block ice. I remember that, to make the homemade ice cream. Of course, my grandfather had the milk cow [inaudible 58:13] and all, and made the best ice cream with the raw milk and the eggs, fresh eggs. I remember that.

T: Wow.

R: One thing that's interesting: most of your cars had real bumpers on them. If your car cut off, look around, motion somebody to come up behind you, and push them. It didn't bend your bumper up. Sometimes it'd rub a little; you might lose a little bit of chrome, but you could push the car a few feet, it'd start, and you'd wave and go on down the road.

T: Nice.

R: Yeah. Nowadays, you dare not touch another car. [Laughter] Rip them all to pieces, and you can't push them to start them anyway. No air conditioning back then, and still had the mosquitos back then. Nickel candy bar was something: you could get a five-cent root beer or a five-cent limeade, that was half a lime, or ten cent got you a whole lime and a big lemon- and limeade. They were so good. The fountain drinks were so good.

T: Which drugstore was that?

R: Mostly Morgan's, is one we mostly patronized.

T: Okay.

R: Now, my wife and them would go to Grey's Drugstore on the other side of the street. They all had the soda fountains in there. The younger boys would get a jar of that [inaudible 59:42] from the soda jerk. That's interesting.

T: Yeah.

R: And they did have the tent circuses back then. To go to the old movie theaters, you know, can you imagine traveling to Richmond and places with no air conditioning in the car? I mean, you stop at a stoplight and think you're going to melt. [Laughter] You didn't know any better.

T: That's right.

R: Very few of the stores had them.

T: That's right. Dave's signaling at me from over there, so I'm going to shut this off real quick.

R: Please.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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