

TMP-012

Interviewee: Cary Franklin

Interviewer: Jessica Taylor

Date: July 12, 2013

T: This is Jessica Taylor interviewing Cary Franklin on July 12, 2013 in Gloucester Courthouse, Virginia. Mrs. Franklin, can you please state your full name?

F: That's Cary Lawson Franklin.

T: Okay, and what is your date of birth?

F: I hate to tell you. Seven, twenty-three, [19]23.

T: Okay.

F: My ninetieth birthday is coming up.

T: That's wonderful. Congratulations. Where were you born?

F: In Gloucester, actually about across the street from where I'm sitting, where we are today.

T: Okay. What were your parents' names and occupations?

F: They were Hazel Lawson and George Lawson. He was the Ford dealer here. Prior to being the Ford dealer, he worked at and owned part of the Botetourt Hotel, the old hotel that's now the museum.

T: What about your mother?

F: She was a homemaker.

T: Okay. What was her name?

F: Hazel.

T: Hazel. Okay. Did you have any siblings?

F: I have a brother.

T: You do?

F: And that was George. He died about two months ago.

T: I'm very sorry. As for you, I know you have had many lives. But what was your occupations?

F: Well, I started out teaching school, and then went to work for Tech as an extension home economist.

T: Okay. What is your earliest memory of Main Street?

F: As a small child, and I think you saw some pictures there of where we used to play. When we lived at the Botetourt building, the maid would bring my brother and me over to the central part of the village, to play in what we called the court green.

T: Okay. When you moved around Main Street, where did you go most often besides your own home?

F: Well, back then was so different because you didn't--all the storekeepers- you knew everybody you passed on the street. Of course, for me, I just lived on one of the side streets, but I visited the hotel. At the time, the Botetourt building was a hotel that my aunts owned and great-aunts owned. I'd visit there and that's where you- sort of central communication.

T: Okay. What were the stores that your parents frequented most often?

F: Well, the main grocery store was Mr. Martin's store, and then Ellis **Corr's** store, and then the drug store, naturally. Two drug stores. One was Morgan's Drugstore, and the other was Grey's Pharmacy. Then later on, we had the A&P come in and those stores.

T: Okay. Did you go Morgan's or Grey's or both?

F: Both.

T: Both. [Laughter]

F: Didn't show any partiality.

T: [Laughter] I understand. Okay. Tell me a little bit about growing up near the Botetourt Hotel.

F: Well, the nice thing about that would be that the people that would come there you'd meet, because everybody was so friendly, and they'd be from all different parts of the state. There's one thing that I think that was- the Botetourt Hotel at that time, I guess you would say, catered to the traveling man. That term 'traveling man'- when the Historical Society did a luncheon or something and we showed the slides that had been taken, and we mentioned the thing, 'traveling man' then. Maybe you don't even know what that term denotes. Each of the large corporations would send out a man to the communities to go to each of the stores and take their orders for any of the products that they sold. Every once in a while—maybe once every six weeks—they had this little group that usually

came to Mathews and Gloucester. Don't know whether they might have crossed the river or not, but they went to all the old country stores. So they were called the traveling man. I guess that's what it was. But we had used that term before, and no one understood what it was. [Laughter]

T: What years did your family run the Botetourt Hotel?

F: That goes back to when I was about four years old. What would that be? Four from- that'd be back in-

T: 1927?

F: That's it. Yeah, about [19]27 or [19]28, because my brother was born on [19]27. It must have been near [19]28 and [19]29.

T: Okay. Were often inside when visitors and guests were there?

F: Oh yeah. Yeah.

T: What was that atmosphere like?

F: Like home. All of them enjoyed it. Of course, they said that the food that was there was the best food they ever did--Of course, my aunts had in the back of the Hotel- they had raised pigs and they had their own. That was their own garden. They had fruit trees and chickens and things, and so naturally people away from home were glad to get the good food.

T: Who made the food? Do you know?

F: Oh yeah. Two or three different cooks. One man in particular was the waiter, but he also took care of any of the other things that went on in the hotel. A lot of people liked to say butler, but he acted more like that.

T: Would locals often come in and intermingle with the visitors?

F: Oh yeah. Yeah.

T: Okay. Did most people arrive in cars?

F: All of them did.

T: All of them did. Even in 1927?

F: Yeah.

T: Okay.

F: The transportation at that time was the old cars. I was thinking, I think it was back when I was probably in high school, that they had the bus service to Richmond. I don't know whether anyone else has mentioned that or not. The Bristol family in West Point owned this bus, and it would take you to Richmond and in the afternoon pick you up and bring you back home. I'm not aware of anything that they did like that to go to the Norfolk area. I don't think that it did. Of course, I listened to my aunts tell it—they catching the steamer, and going to Baltimore and all up in there. Of course, the roads weren't passable, I guess I could tell you. [Laughter]

T: How was life different for you than it was for your aunts' generation?

F: Well, I don't know. I guess being that I went away to college would be one thing. Where they had more of a home atmosphere, I was allowed to go and do more of the things that they didn't do. Think that's about it.

T: Okay. Was courting different for you?

F: Well, yeah. I think so. They were very careful about who you dated. Your mother and daddy had to know who you were dating, and you had to come home. You usually had to know where you were going; whether they checked, I don't know. Anyway, that was part of it, was making sure they knew where you were and you came in at a reasonable hour.

T: What was that like for you?

F: Well, it was just was perfectly normal. At that time, we had the skating rink. Of course, all of us in early--as soon as you learned to skate, that was part of your life, going there on Friday and Saturday nights.

T: So you would go on a date to the skating rink?

F: Yeah, or to the movies. That was about it. [Laughter]

T: If you don't mind me asking, did you date men from your high school?

F: Yes.

T: Anyone outside of high school?

F: Well, yes. The different ones that you would meet at other places. The fellows would, if they could drive, would come down and come for a special something or go skating and all like that.

T: Where are they coming from?

F: Well, the ones that I'm thinking about were mostly from Richmond area. That's about it.

T: And they'd come down to Gloucester?

F: Oh yeah. And then until you had the people that owned summer cottages here- and their sons would come down and that'd be that. You'd get to know them then, and they would bring people down. That's all.

T: Does that promote lasting relationships, or does that kind of-

F: Oh yeah, I would think so. That picture you saw of the dancing: several of those were married and stayed there, and others went away to work and would come home after retirement. Come for retirement years, I guess.

T: It's a way to meet people.

F: Right.

T: Kind of spread your wings a little bit.

F: Right.

T: Was it a shock attending JMU?

F: Of course it was. Being away from home that length of time was difficult. Of course, the transportation was really--I couldn't just up and leave and come home. I had to make arrangements to take the bus and sometimes go to Staunton and take the train to Williamsburg and then somebody would have to meet me. So, that was difficult; it was just easier staying there until then. That was a four hour drive by then to come to Harrisonburg to visit. The parents didn't come as often as they would have if it had been closer.

T: That must have been isolating.

F: Then, too, at that time in particular, the school then did not have chemistry. In my first year in college, I had to take the chemistry. Of course, that was a shock to my nervous system. [Laughter] I had to spend a lot of time studying to catch up with the girls that went from schools that had a little bit better education.

T: Well, how would you describe your high school experience in Gloucester, academically and non-academically?

F: I thoroughly enjoyed high school, and I hear people talking about it now, and what they don't like about school and all. I think taking everything into consideration—because we're talking about the end of the Depression—the teachers that came here were making, like, eighty dollars a month, and they had to pay their board and everything else with that. We're just talking about an entirely different situation when it comes to that. As far as parties, we didn't have a senior prom. We didn't have any of those things attached to the school system. You had your own private parties and all, and so it's different.

T: Where would private parties occur?

F: They would be in your home, and there was a place—a little log cabin—that was built, I guess, by WPA. You could rent that to have a dance or a party.

T: Wow. That's really interesting. Did Gloucester as a whole or your high school have any traditions? Things that would happen on Main Street?

F: I would say not really. I can't remember what it was, what it was for, but we had the one big parade that year. We all dressed in colonial costumes. I think I just can't think of anything really that we celebrated other than that. Of course, we had the ball games at school, but they were mostly basketball. It wasn't large enough. The boys wanted to have a football team, but there weren't that many [Laughter] and no coach, of course.

T: Right.

F: That makes a difference.

T: Hugh Dischinger- do you know him?

F: Yes.

T: He was saying that his father's generation had a party on the court square where they would go around to people's houses on Christmas and drink. Do you remember anything like that?

F: Oh yeah. Everybody had that. It wasn't all on Christmas day, but a lot of them. But that's what you did on Christmas morning: you got up and you went from one

house to the other. I'm sure during probably the late afternoon and night, there might have been plenty of drinking in there, too. Some of the homes I remembered going to that were just--this was every year, you looked forward to their home for Christmas. Then they, in turn, would come to yours.

T: Because I can't experience this, can you give me a sense of what made a home so great that you would really look forward to going there every year? What did they do that was so special?

F: I'm not sure just how to answer that, because I don't know. It just all seems so different today from what it was back then. My family had the doors open to anybody that would come whenever. My friends were welcome to come in, and they would sponsor a party or any of those sort of things that made it just something that--you were just real close with your family and with the community. I'm sure that where I lived down on the Avenue—Hugh lives on the opposite side—the neighbors made sure they knew where we were coming and going to. [Laughter] They were careful about seeing that we were behaving ourselves. [Laughter] I think a lot of that now- so many people don't even know who their next-door neighbor is, where all of us knew one house to the next, and felt free to go at any time and visit with these people, with our neighbors.

T: So holidays are a communal event.

F: I would think mostly, maybe holidays. But most anytime, I felt like when I came home from college, the different neighbors would want me to come by, let them know how things were in the Harrisonburg area and why I liked going to college

and what I was going to do. I think the community was interested in what all of us did, and the schools that we went to and the things that we did.

T: Did you always know that you were going to come back here to Gloucester after college?

F: No, I don't think so. I probably thought- I realized if I had stayed in the program I that went into--I was studying to be a dietician, and my certificate--my graduation was in the home economics with a minor in science. Of course, at the time, I got married right after I graduated from college and I wasn't sure, but I had a feeling I'd live in Richmond because my husband was from Richmond.

T: Oh! You were married already?

F: I was married after college, after I graduated. He was from Richmond, but we decided it was--we were in Portland, Maine, and we weren't going to stay there. We came home and decided that we'd wait until after the first of the year to settle in Richmond or Gloucester. He was given a job at the weapons station, and so we stayed here. And we're glad we did. He is, too, or he was.

T: How did World War II affect the community here? You were in college probably at this point.

F: Right. I guess they were the USO clubs, and all of the communities would have the boys over for dances and girls would get on a school bus-like thing and go across the river to a dance. I remember one time we went somewhere in Mathews. Then actually, when I was away, the girls were going to the dances in

Williamsburg. Whatever club was sponsoring the dance would go to the different communities to pick up the girls to go dance. It was fun meeting all the people. I think the community got involved more then than they have recently. That they were glad for the boys to come and have a day off or a night off and entertain them. You'd meet somebody, and then have them over to a meal, anything that would make them glad that they were in the service.

T: I'm imagining that that would change the social environment considerably, because you have all these people that you've never met before.

F: That's true.

T: An influx of men.

F: That's right. [Laughter]

T: Did that change dating for other women?

F: Well, a lot of the women—I was thinking about way back to talking about the skating rink—some of the boys that were in the service, men that were in the service- would come to the skating rink and married. Later, these girls that they'd met at the skating rink or at these dances, particularly if the man was stationed close by, they would be married. There were quite a few that did marry. Their children now were in school with my children.

T: Wow.

F: Some of the names- you can think back at least a half a dozen or more- that the families are here because of the war.

T: That is so interesting. Do you remember the gas station from the [19]30s and [19]40s?

F: Oh, yes.

T: Did you ever stop there?

F: Oh, we all did. We'd stop in to get--my father was in the Ford business, so we didn't stop and get gas and all as much, but I knew the Brown boys that, on the outside of it, they had that little hotdog stand down there. Mr. Brown was always good to the boys and girls that would come there. I guess that was a meeting spot. Like I said, my family wouldn't need it because my father had that business, but I'm sure it was a stopping place for quite a few people in the community.

T: Did you ever go inside it?

F: Oh yeah. I don't remember that much about it, though, because I was thinking when I saw that it was being remodeled, all I remember was the main opening business, the front door going in there. I guess then, I was thinking I reckon I remember where the automobiles would get repaired right next door to it. That was about all I remember.

T: So you can't really think of anything in the interior that stuck out to you?

F: No.

T: Do you remember there being a ladies' lounge on the side?

F: No.

T: No. Okay. What was Captain Jack like?

F: Just a very nice person. The whole family were. He was a good businessman and ran that business for a long time. He hired responsible people. I knew people that had worked there fifteen, twenty years. I think it was longer than that, but. That was a gathering place, really, you know? People would come in from the Ware Neck area. I'm sure they always stopped there for gas and probably to find out if everything was all right, too.

T: So it would be people from Ware Neck that would gather there?

F: Well, I'm sure that they did, yes. Other than coming in, stopping to get gas, or pick up the newspaper or something like that, just to check and see if everything's all right. Yes. [Laughter]

T: Do you—I know this is so specific—but do you remember anything about the hot dog stand in particular? Who ran it, what it looked like?

F: I knew that the Brown boys ran that, which would be Captain Jack's nephews. I'm sure he helped them through school, too, because their father had died, and the mother. I'm sure he did help them through college. It was a nice place for us to go, because we had very few places we could go other than [inaudible 26:03]. The movies, you see, lasted a week, so after you saw it that was one night and that was the end of that. [Laughter]

T: So the hotdog stand was an acceptable place for kids to go.

F: Right. It was always nicely run.

T: Do you remember any of the people that worked there? Did you know any of them personally?

F: No. I knew that Fred Brown that worked there, and I can't- I don't know. I must not have gone there a whole lot. [Laughter]

T: You don't remember the one-armed man, do you?

F: Yeah.

T: Howard Brown?

F: Yeah. I was trying to think. I hadn't thought about him. [Laughter] Nice guy. But I don't remember anything in particular-

T: Yeah.

F: -except that he was very friendly and we all knew who he was and all that sort of thing.

T: If you could think of any anecdotes for me about Main Street or the gas station in particular- does anything stand out to you?

F: It was there when I was born as far as I'm concerned, and it's still there. In most communities anymore, everything is brand new, not that old. It's sort of--how do I say that?--a place that you always had good thoughts about, and nice people went there and nice people ran it. When we knew it was going to be sold, we weren't real pleased because it had always been there. We're pleased that it's in the situation that it is now, and hopefully that that will continue.

T: You mean the sale where Andy James sold it to George Larrimore? [CF nods]  
What was that period like?

F: I just didn't get involved with that, so I'm just not real sure.

T: Okay.

F: But we were glad that it was sold and glad that it's presentable now for the county, because it had been before. When you shut a building up, it makes it bad for the community. Now that it's open and pleasant-looking and everything.

T: I understand that. When did your father start as Gloucester's Ford dealer?

F: I was trying to think of my brother's age. That was probably, I'd say, 1930 or in the early [19]30s. Then he ran it until he retired while I was in college, so about maybe in the [19]40s. I graduated college in [19]44.

T: Where was it located?

F: It is now where—I was trying to think—there's an art studio in the back of the building. What's the name of that? I asked my daughter about that the other day.

T: Is it Arts on Main?

F: Yep.

T: Okay.

F: That was the building, and of course it sold gas; there were gas pumps out there. I remember my daddy, he and I were always close. When I'd come home from

school, if the World Series and all were going on, I'd always stop there and listen with him to the ball games. Then, of course, he just was in that building. At one time, and that must have been in the [19]30s—several of the men were into the dealing business, Ford and Buick and all that. When Daddy took over, his was just the Ford Motor Company. Later on, he opened up the Ford Tractor Company, over and above the automobile company. As I said, he retired when I was graduated from college.

T: What was business like for him?

F: It was really great, and the people in the lower part of the county all bought their Ford automobiles and Ford pick-up trucks from him. I think that when my husband worked at the weapons station and he got to know a lot of the people in the lower part of the county, they would invite him to go fishing with them. They would always talk about my daddy being such a good person to them. I think that one of the tales that Daddy tells, that it was nothing for this one particular man to pull up in his pick-up truck and then open the box where he carried the fish and the oysters and the clams, and it would be full of cash money to pay for the next car, which was a truck. I remember the term, nine hundred dollars. That was what pick-ups cost at that time. But they had the cash money to pay for it right then.

T: So the people that bought from your father, were they just watermen, or was it a wider range of people?

F: That was a large percent of the people, and then the local village people, they would buy their cars. Of course, the next-door neighbor down there was the Plymouth and Dodge building. They were all friendly and got along well, which was good.

T: This may be too broad a question, but what brought people to your father versus other dealers? Was it the brand or was it your father as a person?

F: I guess it's a little bit of both. Most people would buy a Ford automobile, and we were going to dates in a Ford automobile. I think Daddy got his reputation, that he gave somebody a good deal, and then they would take care of the Ford automobiles back in the back where his shop was.

T: There's nothing particular about it being a Ford?

F: I would think, yeah, a lot of people, that was the only car they wanted, was a Ford automobile, just like there's some people who at the time only wanted a Chevrolet. There were some people that bought a new car every year or every two years, and they'd come back.

T: What kind of person would buy a car every two years? Or every year?

F: Probably a doctor. [Laughter] The doctor and the druggist and the other storekeepers, you know.

T: Okay.

F: Those that had good jobs across the river that could afford cars. Way back then, not every member of the family had a car.

T: That brings me to the question, when did your family first get their first car?

F: Let's see. With him being in the car business, we always had a car.

T: Even in the [19]20s?

F: Yeah. I think we had a car from the minute he went into business.

T: Wow.

F: Can't exactly remember about that, but I'm sure that that was it.

T: Okay. Do you remember going places in it?

F: Oh yeah. Mother would always take us for rides all over the county, and different places. Go visit the grandparents and that sort of thing. I just don't remember being without a car. I might be old, but...the aunts always had a nice car when we would go to Richmond shopping and all. So, I would think almost immediately. I remember mostly having a car.

T: Is there anything you wanted to add?

F: No, I don't think so.

T: Okay.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

Transcribed by: Elizabeth Thomason, August 2013

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