

Transcript of OH-00120

Thurman E. and Idell P. Thompson

Interviewed by
John Wearmouth

on
February 21, 1989

Accession #: 2006.011; OH-00120

Transcribed by Shannon Neal on August 27, 2020

Southern Maryland Studies Center

College of Southern Maryland
8730 Mitchell Road, P.O. Box 910
La Plata, MD 20646

Phone: (301) 934-7626
E-mail: SMSC@csmd.edu
Website: csmd.edu/smsc

The Stories of Southern Maryland Oral History Transcription Project has been made possible in part by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH): Stories of Southern Maryland. <https://www.neh.gov/>



**NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE
HUMANITIES**

Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this transcription, do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Format

Interview available as MP3 file or WAV: ssoh00120 (2:08:01)

Content Disclaimer

The Southern Maryland Studies Center offers public access to transcripts of oral histories and other archival materials that provide historical evidence and are products of their particular times. These may contain offensive language, negative stereotypes or graphic descriptions of past events that do not represent the opinions of the College of Southern Maryland or the Southern Maryland Studies Center.

Typographic Note

- [Inaudible] is used when a word cannot be understood.
- Brackets are used when the transcriber is not sure about a word or part of a word, to add a note indicating a non—verbal sound and to add clarifying information.
- Em Dash — is used to indicate an interruption or false start.
- Ellipses ... is used to indicate a natural extended pause in speech

Subjects

Rural Conditions

Agriculture

Depressions

Genealogy

Segregation

Sharecropping

Religion

Methodist church buildings

La Plata (Md.)

Tags

La Plata United Methodist Church

Transcript

John Wearmouth [J]: Okay this is John Wearmouth interviewing Mr. and Mrs. Thurman E. Thompson at their home on Cherry Lane near Springhill, Maryland just about a quarter of a mile or a little less off of US 301. And I guess three miles from La Plata. Two and a half to three miles from La Plata.

Idell P. Thompson [I]: Something like that.

J: They've lived in this house for about 31 years.

I: We will be 31 years. It's coming up.

J: Okay and Mrs. Thompson was Idell Pearl Fitzgerald. And they're both from south central Virginia. He was born in Nelson County and she nearby in Albemarle. They didn't come up to Maryland until oh about 1936 when they went into Montgomery County and then from there down here to Charles about 1945 and they have lived here ever since. The date is February 21, 1989 and this is part of the Charles County Community College Oral History Program. The central theme of the interview will be agriculture, farm life in Charles County since just after World War II. What—where did you live when you first came into Charles County? Where was your first home here?

Thurman E. Thompson [T]: St. Mary's.

J: St. Mary's?

T: St. Mary's one year.

J: Okay.

T: Then we come to—went to Charles County ever since. What year now....

J: See the church records say that you became members of the church in 1945.

T: Mhm.

J: Did you go to Bethel first?

I: Went to Bethel first.

J: Okay how far did you live from Bethel?

I: Oh we lived at Charlotte Hall. And you can call it Charlotte Hall. We lived at Dr. Jones's farm. On the farm of Dr. Jones over there.

J: Okay about how many miles from the church was that from Bethel?

T: I think they called it from New Market to Bethel Church nine miles.

I: Or something like that.

T: And we were a mile then this side of it.

J: [She market]. Okay so that farm was right in what is now Amish country?

T: Mhm.

J: That farm probably is owned by the Amish today.

I: I don't think it's owned—it's owned by the girls.

T: The daughter of Dr. Jones.

I: The daughter. Dr. Jones's daughters I think own it because they rent it out to not Amish people.

J: Oh okay. What was life like Thurman for you growing up in Nelson County? Were you a farm boy?

T: I sure was.

J: How many children in your mother and father's family?

T: Eight.

J: Eight of them?

T: Eight of them.

J: And where were you? Youngest, oldest, or right in the middle?

T: Oldest.

J: You were the oldest.

T: The old man of them all.

J: Right now how many are still surviving in that from those children?

I: Two daughters. Two sisters.

T: Three brothers. Five. Five surviving.

J: Well that's remarkable.

[I and T]: [Inaudible phrase].

J: And you were born in 1895.

T: 1895.

J: Did you ever think you would come this far in life in the years and come this close to getting through a full century? Did you ever dream that you would?

T: [Probably] I didn't. I did not.

J: You wake up every morning thanking God for another day.

I: Thanking Jesus.

T: That's right.

I: I have—I didn't have but one sister. One whole sister but I have got eight half-sisters.

J: Oh for Goodness sakes and how many are living now?

I: Seven.

J: Well that's remarkable too.

I: I lost one. Sadie you know but she died last year. A year ago. She's been dead about a year ago. One of my half-sisters.

J: Did most of your kin stay down in Virginia?

T: Yes.

J: Okay and yours?

I: Oh yeah and they're most of mine are in Waynesboro.

J: Just nearby?

I: Just nearby mhm. And I have a sister in Richmond. My only whole sister is in Richmond.

J: I see. Do you see her once in a while?

I: Once in a while. I don't get to see her as often as I would like.

J: Yeah so Idell you have told me earlier that your father was a cobbler?

I: My—

T: Grandpa.

J: Grandfather.

I: His, his father.

J: Oh I see.

I: His father. I as well as I can in my mind and he come over here and did that work. Made the shoes that my father wore.

J: I see. Do you think your grandfather actually was born in Ireland?

I: He must have been.

J: Okay so there's no record of the family being here before him?

I: No, no, no but the—and the rest of them all my father's brothers and all was here lived in Virginia. But now [they's] just about all gone.

J: And your father sharecropped did he Thurman?

T: Right.

J: So there was no farm to break up and hand on down to the boys?

I: No.

T: No, no.

J: And at what time did you feel you would have to leave that farm and go out on your own? How old were you when you began thinking about what would have to be done?

T: I began to think of myself when I was about 20 years old.

J: Until that time you were simply in your father and mother's household?

I: Yeah.

J: Putting your shoulder to the wheel?

T: Right. We shared we stayed together. [One day till we shared together].

J: Was it a fairly good life do you remember?

T: I enjoyed my part of it. I enjoyed it very much.

I: We didn't know any better. It had to—it must—it had to be a good life.

J: Yeah everybody was about the same.

I: Everything [mostly] was the same and I think we enjoyed it.

T: I continued on with my father until I was 25 years old. And I got married at 25. Then I went on my own.

J: Wow okay. Where did the two of you meet? Under what conditions? What were you doing? What brought you together?

T: [I don't know what you think of it but I like it.] Course I was a young man roaming around over the country on weekends, Sundays or whatnot. I went to many churches. Different churches with different young people. Well this particular afternoon—

I: Sunday, Sunday afternoon.

T: I was a motorcycle rider and I had purchased a [engine] motorcycle. Two cylinders.

J: A twin huh?

T: And this particular Sunday afternoon I went up the river, Tye River.

J: Which river?

T: Tye River.

I: Tye River.

T: Nelson County, Tye River. And it didn't have a bridge across the river and it was a little too much water to take the cycle across so I parked it over here and went across the walking [part I walked over it] and walked up to a friend of [home] and the meantime I had gathered a hat full of chinquapin.

I: You know what chinquapins are?

J: No.

I: [Laughs].

J: Is it a pine tree...?

T: It's a little nut.

I: It's a little—

T: Grows on a bush. [I'd've like to given you a little plate of it]. Beautiful leaf. Anyway this was old Doctor [Meekl's] home. And my wife at that time was living Mrs. [Meekl].

I: Doctor and Mrs. [Meekl].

T: Mrs [Meekl].

J: How was their name spelled?

I: Pardon?

J: How was their name spelled?

I: [M-double—meeks, Meeks].

J: Miggs?

I: [Meekl].

T: M-double E—

I: K.

T: M-E-E-K-L.

I: [Meekl].

T: [Meekl].

I: And he was an excellent doctor. [Oh he was he was a good doctor.]

J: Good old country doctor.

I: Yes indeed he rode horseback he didn't—that was before the cars came out.

T: So I'm taking my chinquapins to my friend and we had [a few words] and I looked over in the on the lawn of [little] doctor's place. He was operating on [mother's] tooth.

I: At that time.

T: Pulling. And he was home on his porch reading his paper. This young lady looked up sitting in their automobile.

I: [I don't know if I was writing or looking at a book]. I don't know what I was doing, but I was in there doing something.

T: So I said to my friend, I said, "That is a good looking lady sitting [into] that car." [I put on gloves and give her a call]. [I don't know] my friend didn't, didn't know what I was gonna do [inaudible]. He didn't think I had the nerve. Also the doctor the old doctor's wife was sitting under shade reading.

J: Nearby observing huh?

I: Yeah.

T: Observing that's right. That's a good word. So I went by and introduced myself to the doctor, old doctor's wife. What was her name?

I: Minnie.

J: Minnie [Meekl].

T: And I offered some of my food. Shared my chinquapins. "No," she says, "thank you. Maybe the young lady over in the machine sitting in the car." I go bounding right down by the tree. So I went over and met the young lady. Introduced myself. She had my—

I: Chinquapin.

T: Chinquapin. We worked up a little conversation. Not a long one. [Inaudible phrase] but it was [pretty] to me.

J: You were about 16?

I: Maybe. I'm born at—

J: 1920?

I: Something but it wasn't 20's.

J: It was about 1920 I gather.

I: I was—

J: Thurman you were about 25 at that time Thurman?

T: I was [maybe] 25.

J: So you would've been about 16. Sweet 16 and a Model T.

I: He had just got that Model T.

J: He noticed that didn't he.

I: [Inaudible] he did.

J: So things took their course after that.

T: So...[farming] that particular year we [poor and short] [inaudible phrase]. It was a dry, awful dry—not as hot as the last summer, but it was a hot summer dry. So I decided to take a little trip down to the Southwest. No I think it was the Northwest. Pocahontas, Virginia.

I: Pocahontas, west—Pocahontas, Virginia or West Virginia?

T: Virginia. Pocahontas, Virginia.

I: Whichever.

T: [I know women in the coal mine].

J: Near Blue Fields and [Wishville], Bristol?

T: Pocahontas.

I: [Inaudible] Blue Field I think it is.

T: Pocahontas [coal field]. And I didn't let her get out of my sight or system. We kept in touch with [a little] writing. And then I came home. Well our mine caved in. So it was gonna be about five or six weeks before we'd get back in operation. I decided to come home and I did. I came home and I didn't go back.

J: Was your plan to get a job there in Pocahontas?

T: I was working there—

J: Oh you actually had a job.

T: Oh yes I was working. I was operating a dig [vehicle] pulling cars in the mines and bringing the loads out.

J: And getting cash money?

T: That's right.

J: For a change.

I: [Inaudible] and don't you know he let up there with them owing him a payment and he never did get it. He never did.

J: I suppose it's too late now.

T: [After I got a paid day left,] well.

I: Left behind.

T: It was three days salary they held back on. And I never even went back for that [long] [inaudible]. [You know what I'm saying?]

J: Were you—did you still have the motorcycle at this point?

T: I believe I sold the motorcycle before I went out there.

I: I believe I don't know, I don't know.

T: I think I did. Yeah I sold it. I sold to a boy, Wood. Wood fellow. I got rid of that yeah.

J: So what year did you get married now?

I: 1921.

J: Oh for heaven's sakes. And the month?

I: March the 9th.

T: March the 9th.

I: We have our anniversary coming up soon.

J: And it will be which one now?

I: [From March I mean the 21st]—what am I talking about. From—

J: 68?

I: Maybe. A child told me yesterday. I cannot get it in my mind that it's that long. But she said—

J: Well 21 to 89, subtract the 21.

I: Yes.

J: 68 years. Coming up.

I: Well that's what my granddaughter told me yesterday.

J: That's right.

I: I said, "That can't be 68." Oh she say, "Grandma yes it is."

J: It's got to be 68 years of wedded bliss.

I: Yeah.

J: Ever had any regrets at all either one of you? Has it been a good life?

I: We might have had them but we never expressed them.

J: You got through them.

I: Got through them.

J: They wore themselves down and drifted away.

T: Pardon me John, let me make a comment.

I: We've had some rough times, some good times, some rough times, and some hard times.

T: I have one regret that I still remember. My intention was to correct that this attitude but I didn't do it. And I still regret this. I regret it so much. But I'm trying to live with it. I am living with it. I'm satisfied. That she [forgive me]. We went to visit my mother and on this visit it came occasion that she brought her testament in I was sitting on the couch and she sit down by me and she says, "Son, I wish you'd read me up to [verses in chapter John]. In John Chapter [17]—

I: So and so—

J: Now what church did she go to?

T: Baptist.

J: I see.

T: Right off the same breath my sister now she was living in the home my sister my mother was. My sister called me and I excused myself. Her husband seemed like he was going to be late getting in. And she said, "Would you mind bringing in a few loads of woods and put it in the hall there for the night because Lawrence will be late coming home."

I: Oh yeah I know him. I know who you talking about now.

T: So one thing after another, my mother she [was moving] back to her room. Consequently when I got leisure, the leisure I went on to back to where I was sitting. My mother was gone. And I never did get to read that.

J: Oh for heaven's sakes. You can't always call them.

I: No, that's true.

J: Who knows.

T: But that's the only thing that I can think of that I do regret that.

I: No—

T: I regretted that.

I: His mother has lived with—come and lived with us for the summer and she and I have never, never did have a cross word but one time and I was switching one of the children. You know used to be you used a—[the ones that have that little bit bend around].

J: Yeah a green willow, a green willow stick was a good one.

I: Well anyway she didn't like for me to do that and she scolded me. And I told her that whenever those little children needed correcting I would do it. And that's the only time that I can remember that we had a cross word. I don't say that was cross I just let her know.

J: A difference of opinion.

I: Yeah there was a difference of opinion.

J: If that's all a man has to regret in his life I tell you Thurman you've got no big regrets. That's something to feel sad about. I'll tell you, this could be the end of it. It's on tape. He's gone on record. He's said it.

I: We had—we raised—we had 10 children.

J: What were their names and the order of their birth? We should get that down now.

I: Well the oldest one is Jr. Thurman Thompson, [inaudible] Thurman Jr. The next one was Bill and he's the one we lost in service, James William.

J: At [Bougainville]. Okay.

I: James William named my after my daddy and his daddy. And the next on then is a daughter, Jane. And she's down in Tennessee—down in Florida right now with another daughter of ours. And the next one would be Winston. Winston our son that had a stroke.

J: Now I know him.

I: You know him? Oh yeah he calls me nearly every morning. And the next one. Who's the next oldest?

T: Anna Catherine.

I: Anna Catherine and that's Jimmy Rolland's wife. You should know them too. They live in Charlotte Hall.

J: Yeah I do.

I: And Alice. Alice [Caroline].

T: No, no, no, Maude Ann.

I: Maude Ann? Maude Ann next?

T: Mhm.

I: Well she's in Florida. She married Edward and then he's the one that's in the hospital today with this operation.

J: Ed Grants?

I: Ed Grants. And then Alice. She's in Texas. They're scattered all over.

J: And [who was] the baby of the family?

I: We have a son in Tennessee.

J: What's his name?

T: George.

I: George. We have a son down there. And then we got a daughter in Baltimore. Our youngest daughter's in Baltimore and our youngest son lives over here in Welcome.

J: Now he's the one I know. What is his first name?

I: Lester.

T: Lester.

J: Yeah Lester used to be at my Sunday School class.

I: Yeah oh did he?

J: Yes indeed. 1959 to 60.

I: Well you see his wife is Catholic.

J: I see.

I: And he didn't go Catholic but he does he goes with them. He's sociable and goes with them to church. And they've got a little boy now that's getting ready for his—what do you call that? I don't know what you—

J: Confirming?

I: Yes.

J: Well what did you do Thurman during the first 15 years of your married life to keep the family together? What did you do to bring that cash money into the house?

T: We continued on farming.

I: We continued on farming. We sold eggs, milk, butter, whatever.

J: Where was your farm now? Next—near his father's place?

I: No. No.

T: What was the question?

J: Where was your own farm now? You left your father's farm after you got married did you?

T: We went out and rented another farm.

I: Yeah.

J: Okay that's what I meant. Also in Nelson County?

T: Nelson County.

I: Right there.

J: Okay what were your big cash crops?

T: Tobacco.

J: Tobacco?

T: Tobacco. [Dark fine] tobacco.

J: What kind?

T: Dark fine tobacco.

J: How did that differ from the Charles County leaf?

T: Well this tobacco's dark fine tobacco you can [cure it by heat, with heat]. Charles County tobacco [hand cured].

I: You know Lester still raises tobacco.

T: Huh?

I: I tell him Lester still raises tobacco.

T: Oh oh yes mhm.

J: So that was your money crop now?

T: That really that was the money.

J: Okay—

I: We raised the chickens and we got the sold the eggs. You know when you take a basket of eggs and nowhere to store them you trade them off.

J: Now was this primarily your part of the farming operation?

I: I, part of—most of it and that was special.

J: Did you have milk cows?

I: Oh yeah.

T: Oh yes. We had a milk cow.

I: Milked the cow and [inaudible phrase] after they got old enough.

T: We raised our own [inaudible] raised pork.

I: Winston used to do the milking for me.

J: Where were you living when he did that?

I: We was living up in—

T: Montgomery.

I: No over here. When was that? When we moved from up there come down here. Where was?

T: St. Mary's.

I: Huh?

T: St. Mary's.

J: You were near Mechanicsville, Charlotte Hall, you mean over there?

T: Yeah.

J: On the Jones farm?

I: No it wasn't on the—well yeah. Winston helped me when we was on the Jones farm.

J: Now where were your children born? How many were born in Virginia?

I: Oh boy.

T: Five of them.

J: Okay.

I: Alice was—Alice was the last one born in Virginia. Georgie was born in Montgomery County. Peggy was born in Montgomery County. And Lester was born over there at Doctor Jones [inaudible phrase].

T: That's right.

J: Where was the place in Montgomery County? Were you sharecropping or renting outright?

I: Yes.

T: No I was doing farming for a lady. I was working for her. She paid me a salary [on a commission].

I: That's right. That's right.

T: On a it [was a stock and grain] farm.

J: I see. Near what town?

T: Laytonsville.

I: Laytonsville.

J: Oh okay I know where it is. Yes Laytonsville pretty country. Not far from Olney and Burtonsville.

T: It was between Olney and Damascus.

J: Yeah that's right. Yeah that is pretty country.

T: It was.

J: Now did this—was this an improvement for the living for your family? Did this offer you advantages over the Virginia?

T: Yes.

I: We thought it did yes.

J: Did it give you more cash to work with?

T: That's right. That's right. Well I had a family coming along and I wanted to do the best I could for them. And this was an opportunity and I taked advantage of it.

J: How did you hear about it?

I: An ad in the newspaper.

T: Washington paper.

I: Washington paper and the gentleman he answered the ad. Did you call him or what? Anyway he come down this man.

J: He came down to see you?

I: He came down he went off [inaudible phrase]. Yeah he went up—he went up to see Mr. [Plumber] was his name. George [Plumber], George [Plumber].

T: He came down to see me and this lady the owner was his wife.

J: I see.

I: That's how they're managed.

J: Were the depression years in Nelson County during the 30's were they pretty tough compared to what they'd been in the 20's?

I: Yes. Yes indeed.

J: You really noticed hard times?

I: Oh yes.

J: Okay what seemed to be the big differences?

I: I don't know.

J: You got less and less for what you grew?

I: Got less and less for what you grew and well...

T: [Bella]

I: There wasn't any—there's no money. There was no money.

T: The Agricultural Department...[they first pulled back] on the farmers of Nelson County. And most of them were farming tobacco. The Agricultural Department got it [in some way or another] advised the farmers to cut acreage, cut acreage. They thought by cutting their acreage down would cut the...

J: Would keep the price reasonably?

T: That's right.

J: Didn't want the bottom to fall out of the market.

I: You know that's almost like a dream thinking back that far.

J: So what are we talking about? 1934 or so?

T: Yes.

J: Yeah alright.

I: Yeah.

J: That adds up okay. So that was one of the things that made you start looking around for a better life?

I: Yeah a better life.

J: Were you looking in Virginia? Did you have any idea that you would leave the state at all?

I: I think this was a almost a surprise more than anything else.

T: It was—

[Tape Interruption]

J: So how these two different worlds in the Nelson County area as you were coming along?

T: As I said today I've [become I've come along with] I've grown up with it. With children [these old] [darkies] it was uncle and aunt.

I: Aunt [pronounced ant] they didn't say aunt [pronounced änt] either they just—

T: [Aunt].

I: Yeah.

T: Same thing. And if I happened to make a mistake and say [inaudible phrase], I tell you [oh that's old nigger]. Man my mother got on me because he did not say, "Oh Henry Thompson or Alice Thompson." No he would, "Mrs., [Master] Henry, Ms. Alice." Now they didn't sit down and eat side by side.

I: No indeed.

T: But my mother seen that they ate the same food that I had. So they were respected—

I: But there wasn't many—you didn't see very many of them. There wasn't very many darkies, colored people. Not as I remember.

T: No not as—

J: Not as many as here.

I: As we have today. And the children did not go to school together. They didn't go to the white school and all that.

J: Okay when you found out that they wanted you up here in Montgomery County what did you have to do all the sudden to get ready to break loose from down there and get on the road?

I: Just pack up [all the] belongings we had and catch a—did we get a bus?

T: Yeah.

I: We got a bus there. We didn't have an automobile at that time.

J: I see okay. What did you have to dispose of down there? Was there certain—a few pieces of equipment?

T: Well we had sold our crop you know.

J: So that was out of the way.

T: That was out of the way yeah.

J: What month of the year did you leave Nelson County?

T: March.

J: March.

T: March departed [inaudible phrase]—

J: Had you ever been this far north before?

T: I had been—I'd been to Philadelphia for a trip with my grandfather. To [inaudible phrase]. I had worked in Baltimore the ship yards. Ship building after the war. I went to Baltimore and worked over at the—

I: And I had been in Baltimore too but I was never you know...he was working over there.

T: I worked a little [trap there for] ship builders. Baltimore ship builders. That was when I came out in November. Everything [was always a]. That was down tilling on the farm. [The cheap thing is more business]. Thinking about this lady here. [Brother John] I had made up my mind I think.

I: Well we lived in Baltimore after we was married. We lived in Baltimore don't you know?

T: Yes we did! We made another—

I: Our eldest son—

T: [Brother John I can say this more].

J: In 1921 for a while you lived in Baltimore?

T: Yeah, yeah.

I: Since 21 we lived in Baltimore yeah but I don't—

T: We went through the Depression...that was many...[welfare]...

J: Lot of people were getting help from the government.

I: Yes. But I'll have to say I hold my hand [the door] one time I had the welfare people bring me a bag of flour. Now that's it. I don't know why I felt like I didn't feel right.

T: We never were down to—

I: Never went out to pick up nothing that they had, but they brought this bag of flour. A little bag of flour whatever it was. And that is all I had ever had from welfare.

J: Made you feel a little bit uncomfortable [attitude] to take something?

I: Yes.

J: And never any after that?

I: No that was it.

J: What kind of quarters did you move into at Montgomery County?

I: Very good, very nice.

J: Comfortable? Okay.

I: Yeah comfortable they sure were.

J: When you got up here were you pleased that you had made the move?

I: I think so. I'm sure—

T: I know you were glad.

I: He know we're [glad] and he loved the friends he made. There was good people, nice people, good people.

J: What were your responsibilities there now? Exactly what chores were given you? What jobs to do in Montgomery County?

T: I tell you I operated a grain and cattle farm for a lady. Mrs. [Plumber] was her name. After two or three years, after I've been—after we've been there two or three years...I never seen [inaudible] move from either one. I was in the home for meals. I was in the home for a little gathering. I never seen a move or heard a word no way shape to give me any any lead that was anything wrong between the two, this man and wife. All the sudden she called for settlement. She went downtown to Washington, DC and got an apartment and had our son, oldest son Jr., move her belongings to the apartment. This was in...

I: I can't remember exactly, but a long time ago.

T: It was in the wintertime of the year. And one day the husband...came down to the farm and he walked around and looked at everything even the buildings. And noticed some of the buildings need some repair. But he says he don't want me to have nothing to do with it. He said Mr. Thompson—nah didn't even say Mr. Thompson. Most of the time he called me Thurman. His wife's name was [Virginia]. Now I hope I'm not.

I: What?

T: Virginia.

I: I don't remember what her name was.

T: He said she was a good girl when I married her and still a good girl but her people [inaudible phrase] and now she wants to [follow] them.

I: Well she got what they left. The property, the home they left that to her so.

J: So she came into some property and money all of the sudden.

I: She sure did.

T: All of the sudden that's right. Come into property and money.

J: Okay. Did you stay on the same place all years in Montgomery County?

I: No sir. We moved to—

J: Oh okay.

T: No [inaudible].

I: We moved on his property when we went up there but when we left up there we were living on Mrs. Plumber's property.

T: But I was taking care of the [more] farm [inaudible phrase]—

I: His—taking care of his farm the same as he was down there.

T: He didn't have a house. The house wasn't back on this farm. The wife's farm. Well so we were living in the quarters, living quarters on the lower farms, his farm. But we got along, we got along fine. We were concerned because we got along with both parties real well.

J: When did you buy your first automobile? Up here in Montgomery County?

T: No, no. My first automobile was the [Sport Model Dodge]. I bought it from...well the dealer was in Lovington. Baker was the dealer.

I: Yeah.

T: It was a used—it was a used car.

J: In what town?

T: What?

J: In what town?

T: Lovington, Lovington, Virginia.

J: In Nelson County?

T: Nelson County.

J: Was it an open side curtain car?

T: Right.

J: Four cylinders?

T: Six cylinders.

J: Six.

I: Is that the one that [would rumble seat]?

T: Yeah.

I: Is that the one—yeah it had the rumble seat yeah.

T: It finally give down—I gave it to a brother in law. Your sister.

I: Got passed on.

T: Gave it to him and he take it home.

J: And what did you buy next?

T: After I came to Maryland and bought a Pontiac from a dealer in Gaithersburg by the name of Tin Motor Company. Tin Motor Company. And we moved that—we come to Maryland that lasts for us a good while.

J: What year was the Pontiac? What model? What model year?

T: I think it was a 45, 45.

I: Way back.

J: Yeah.

T: Yeah a 45.

J: Well what led up to your coming to Charles County? What were the conditions that made you decide you'd have to make or break.

T: Now brother John. There was a gentleman by the name of my same name, Thompson who was superintendent at [Erhlong] dairy farm in Bethesda. He was a superintendent of this farm. He comes down in St. Mary's and buys this farm down on the water there. He came over to my place and we got acquainted and talking and found out that I was a—had done tobacco growing in Virginia. He come around [every so often] and [one of the come up this was a] what they called the dry stock farm. Where the bulk of cattle, cows that wasn't milking you know, the dry stock farm. It was a grain farm you raise the grain with [inaudible]. And finally we got together one day and he thought like a whole lot of [inaudible]. So finally he...well getting down to the [gritty] and he offered me a proposition and it was alright but then between me and him—between him and his [association] at the dairy farm the chemical mix ups...when I come to find out the equipment that he was bringing to this farm in St. Mary's, his farm, belonged to [Erhlong]. And [I was] some of the, the machines I call them, the head of the whole work come around and begin to ask me some questions that I didn't quite understand and finally [the]

gentleman and his wife that was [associated] with [Erhlong] farms dairy farm lived in New York. And his business down to this farm he take notice. He notice that he missed a couple cows. He missed some equipment and the equipment that he was missing I hauled them from [Erhlong] farms down there.

J: To near Mechanicsville? We talking about that place?

T: To this man's farm.

I: St. Mary's—what was the name of that place?

T: Huh?

I: What did they call that farm?

T: [Erhlong].

I: [Erhlong] farm.

J: How's that spelled now?

I: Is that one [Erhlong] farm down there was it?

T: Huh?

I: Was that [Erhlong] farm? I thought the [Erhlong] farm was up in—

T: Up in Montgomery County.

I: What was the name of the one down here? I don't for gosh sake [inaudible]. It was in St. Mary's. It was down in St. Mary's County. It was almost down to the.

T: [Venglo] Park Hall.

I: Park Hall.

J: Oh way down there?

I: It wasn't [South] Parkway [inaudible phrase]—

J: Way down past Leonardtown.

T: Yeah way down. So I've got some pictures of it. This man must have been making some wrong move and finally I decided that I'm [going to talk with someone]. Well I talked with an attorney. [At sir] Thompson's quality himself. And he didn't encourage me but he says maybe says you can get along with him maybe says straighten him out. But I had about made up my mind then that I was gonna get out of it, get away from it. So here comes Doctor [Jim Jenny Jones of Burton there] in Charles County. And he had this little farm about New Market. So there was a county agent by the name of Mr. Julius Johnson. And I contacted [inaudible phrase]. And he told Doctor Jones about me [inaudible phrase]. So he came to see me and [went off at

that bridge?] got [all turned] and I pulled up and left. Left everything down [there]. After I moved up to New Market [Charlotte Hall]. I think this did the job. Another gentleman [from here] the [Erhlong] farm came to see me. He had trouble finding it. And by name being Thompson he thought you know I was some related to...

I: The other Thompson.

T: Supervisor of the farm there. I told him I [I never] heard of George Thompson. Only my own boy. Until this man come about. He questioned me about what type of equipment did I haul from [Erhlong] farms to this farm. Well I named them off to him. But he before he got into the he said we will not asking you to drag you into the affair. He said your name will never be told no more because we know you better than we do the man that's been with us for ten years.

J: So he was a little bit on the crooked side?

T: That's right.

J: So anyway through him you did end up down here just through this connection.

I: Well we—this property was for sale and at that time our daughter that's in Florida now with Eddy, Eddy [Grants], was living—they had built a house down here and I had always claimed this out here. That was mine. I was going—that was going to be mine someday. So finally we came down here and bought this land and built our house. And it'll be 32 years this September. No—

T: 31.

I: 31 years this coming September the 12th that we've been here.

T: And it's been very satisfactory. We love it.

I: I don't know one thing [inaudible] look like me over there. [I don't know what they gonna do].

T: We got it better than going [country] road over there.

I: [Inaudible] going on [country] road now but I'm sure that'll be alright.

T: But we need—we need some...

I: Some more families in here.

T: More families or residents to get a road. We can't get a road under the county or the state until we have so many residents.

I: Residents.

J: How many do you need?

I: I think—how many is it? It's as many as six and don't make no difference how many more but it's so many.

J: At least six?

I: At least six I think.

J: And how many are there now?

I: There's five. There's five.

J: Well where were you working when you first began living here?

T: Brother John, I had retired from farming. And the gentleman over in Prince George's, lower Prince George was looking for someone familiar with tobacco. And our county agent who was Mr. Brown, T. B. Brown.

J: P. D. Brown? Tall Dennis Brown? Yeah okay.

T: He named me to the gentleman, older gentleman, and he came to see me. And he told me what he was up against and what he was looking for. And made some suggestions...I still couldn't give him my answer. He says, I'll tell you he says, "Think about it." He says, "I'll see you in about 10 days. Think about it." So he's reasonable. Well we thought about it. I talked it over with my wife. So we decided to take him up on the situation. Now that's when I was vacant from the United Methodist Church in La Plata. When I made the move from Charles County over in Prince George I was vacant. Not fully I still held my membership but [it's just a little] too far.

I: Didn't come—didn't come every Sunday. Couldn't make it every Sunday.

T: Didn't make it every Sunday. But when they got to the sanctuary Reverend...

J: Warner?

T: Warner.

I: Must've been. Must've been. I can't remember names I forget.

T: Reverend Warner was there. And when he came...in going through his church records of who was who, who was who. But I hadn't showed up [nowhere] a meeting or at the church or he had met so finally one Sunday we came to church. The La Plata Church.

J: And where were you living at this very time?

T: It was Prince George's County.

J: Okay where up there?

I: Naylor

T and J: Naylor?

J: Okay.

I: Well I thought of that right quick, Naylor.

J: Not far from Croom?

T: That's right. Croom and then Naylor. And—

I: Although I really don't [inaudible].

J: While you were living in Prince George's you still owned this property here?

I: We bought this property here.

J: Had you built a house here yet?

T: No, no.

J: Okay.

I: No but we built—we stayed living up there and built this house here.

T: While we were living there.

I Come back and forth. That man just left us [inaudible].

T: After three years' service to the [home owner, the landlord, after a service for three years]...

I: Then he left us.

T: So Reverend Warner [got to recline asking where Thompson's live]. So finally he [calls] for [Adrian Sutton]. He said, "Do you know where the Thompson's live?" Well he said, "I don't know whether I can point the house out to you or not but I can take you to the vicinity," he said. Well he taken a day off and to look me off and he was all day from sun up to. He done rode Prince George's County over. But finally he came in and I had asked for a leave from the official board, administrative board, while I was over there. I was coming to church, Methodist church in La Plata once a year, a month [and a half]. And as I say finally he found me. He said, "Thurman,

we got to have you back on the administrative board." I said, "Reverend, I'm too far away from there. I pray that I can attend."

J: How far was that? It was over 20 miles wasn't it?

T: Right around 22 or 23 miles you'd say.

I: Quite a ways.

T: So he excused me with that part of it but he wanted to go back on the administrative board. I wanted to be on the board in there at a particular time. I said, "Well...I'm a pretty busy fellow." [You know this farm]. But I said, "I don't never tell him business I couldn't help out one way or another with the church or not." So then he got mad. Particular meeting he would call me, "Can you make it?" Well I think most of the time I did.

J: Who were the other people on the board at that time?

T: On the board?

J: Mhm.

T: Oh I could start off I could name two of them.

J: Now what year are we talking about? 1954, 5?

T: Yeah.

J: Okay and Reverend William Warner?

T: William Warner.

J: Okay I met him you know.

T: That's right. Well...I had served [on the] right [camp]. [Inaudible] I don't even know. And we kept [inaudible phrase] Mr. Warner and then I [toured] over in Prince George's County [inaudible phrase]—

[Tape Interruption]

J: Okay so you want to add a little something to the tape from the Methodist Church history.

T: Yes. This was a very particular meeting. It was for the sanctuary. You were getting into the sanctuary.

J: Okay the church was still being held in the basement?

T: In the—we were still in the basement.

J: Okay so we're talking about 1953 roughly?

T: Yeah.

J: Beginning to plan for the new sanctuary in La Plata.

T: Well the district superintendent—now I'm a little confused on the superintendent of which one. Michael Robertson [inaudible].

I: And Michael [says]—

T: I'm trying to think but now I can't see nobody's face but Michael. He was a little short fellow. Anyway he had this [sermon]. This particular [sermon]. This was in early spring. After service he had called for this meeting with the trustees and the building commission. All that wanted to attend.... And they gathered in the kitchen. They taking [to these] homemade tables and putting together and had the meeting round the tables in the kitchen in the hall. And the sanctuary was [rolled out]. The question of the sanctuary. I don't remember the number—

J: Now Thurman at this time the church had consolidated already and you are talking about the Bethel and the Dentsville and the old La Plata Church people now meeting together in the new basement?

T: That's right.

J: Place of worship.

T: Right.

J: Alright okay.

T: This one brought up the question.

J: Who was there that night?

T: Three particular men. And I can name—I can see them. Tom [Baldwin], Mr. Tom Baldwin. Did you know a gentleman up on the [Dolly] Lane by the name of [Gridley]?

J: Colonel [Gridley]?

T: Colonel [Gridley]. Oh he was a hardworking man. He done more work in [another] stretch than all of them put together. Rose, Rose, Adrian Rose.

J: That's right.

T and I: Adrian Rose.

J: Mr. Rose, Adrian Rose.

T: Mr. Adrian Rose. Well the [inaudible phrase]. Finally, district superintendent...now this [group] was [Inaudible phrase].

J: Okay Reverend [Kemp] [Inaudible]—

T: Well he sat back there and he didn't have nothing to say. Finally, the superintendent...it must have been Michael.

I: Well it was the superintendent. You don't—

T: Yeah. He said, "Reverend [Kemp], have you got nothing to say?" He says, "I'm not [building no nothing] [mess in the church]. Talk to them, talk to the members. I'm only here as a minister. I'll be glad to work in the new sanctuary." He would not, he would not have nothing to say. And he told the superintendent he wasn't building it. Members of the church [they know what they want]. There were three ladies there in the meeting.

I: I was thinking about Professor Somers. Wasn't he—did he have anything to do with it?

T: Oh yes. [Milton] Somers. Oh I could take time I could name a whole bunch of them. So finally time was calling up and district superintendent says, "How many of you are available for the morrow morning at nine o'clock?" This would be Monday morning. Well I'll be here. Well I'll be here. I will try to make it. Maybe I—this one had to go to a little business [inaudible] I'll be there in time to say my little piece. Well Monday morning came. I got ready and I went [all up]. Nine o'clock...wasn't but two ahead of me. [Adrian Rose] and Colonel [Gridley]. They were there. Mr. [Walter Bolton] was supposed to have been there. Well I mean he was the particular one [inaudible phrase].

I: [That was Tom.]

T: [Building from there] and he came his son [Jepsen] he came. Mr. Joe. Well finally [gathered] superintendent number one he was a half hour late. That was swift with some of them. He was [sweating it out]. [Bill Rolland] was there [even down on the grandpa was there]. Well they called the meeting [up again]. It was 26 men and three ladies at the meeting. Well Margaret Compton she come a little late but she was there. And the big [inaudible].... Well questions moved around the table. Answers would come [tab] that down. Finally one begins to walk away and another would walk away. "Oh you can't go." "Oh I got to go man. I got work to do. We getting nowhere here. I got to go." The district superintendent had made this comment several times, several times: "Do you want to build a church? Do you want a church?" Very few comments. Finally he got up and stood up and cried, he said, "Do you people want a church?" Margaret Compton said, "You look here. I am sick of hearing that word. I don't accept it." Said, "Yes we want a church and we gonna build a church." That started the things rolling a little bit. Money was the question. How much money have you got or how much can you raise? A couple thousand, 15 hundred. [Inaudible sentence]. How much money do you need? What type of

building? How much money do you need? Do you know who gave the answer to that question? Mrs. Irene [Gammel]. She [opened the door?].

J: [Gambell]?

T: [Gammel]. Irene [Gammel]. She was the wife of—

I: No one ask me what his name was because I can't remember. But anyways I know who Irene was.

T: They owned that gravel pit up there.

J: Okay.

T: And he was a contractor. She said, "I and my husband work together. And says, "I'll say that we'll give 2,000 dollars." Well that opened it right away. The next one Wilber Hancock. Now this was between the Hancock family. The mother and father, the son, the wives, whatever. They would give three thousand dollars. And the one that I remember pictured so well on that day, [Adrian Rose], he run his hand in his pocket and he got two or three one dollar bills. He said, "well," he says, "I got two or three whichever you wanted dollars to buy my lunch this week." But he says, "I'll give two thousand dollars." Oh brother [David Rolland].

J: Now [Adrian Rose] was not a wealthy man.

T: No, no.

I: Oh no.

J: What did he do for a living?

T: What did he do for?

J: Yes.

T: He was a sharecropper but he was a good carpenter too so finally he gave up his farming and went to carpentry work.

I: [Adrian Rose] was a nice good person.

T: Oh he worked hard.

J: And he had two sons didn't he?

I: Yes he did.

T: Travis and...

I: I don't—

J: Good boys.

T: Yes, yes that's right. Well brother [David Rolland] and his two sons went out. They excused themselves and when they came back brother [Paul] says, "Mr. Chairman." And you know who was the chairman? Who they had to make chairman?

J: No.

T: Mr. Somers was supposed to have been the chairman but he had to leave and go to the school. A young man by the name of William—he didn't even belong to the church. He felt maybe they might come in but they didn't....

J: Well you'll think of it later.

T: He was putting down the moneys you know that they were—

J: Who was pledging what.

T: Who was pledging what. And now that's the way [I went on and I think of all the money to pledge three thousand dollars. It wasn't gonna be all paid at one time. It was in 12 months. In 12 month time. And I [really marked] myself out and I did not name my wife.

J: Were both of you there?

I: No I wasn't.

T: No my wife didn't go. She didn't go. But I pledged a thousand dollars. I think I had about five dollars in my pocket.

I: Oh well.

T: Anyway I pledged a thousand dollars. And I didn't say in a particular time but I would give that much you know towards the building. But you know what now that went over [this is sad] I think it all totaled about 32 or 33,000 dollars. The district superintendent was going to pull the board, the high officials.

J: In the conference level?

T: Yeah the general conference.

J: Now this was Marian Michaels? That was his full name wasn't it? Mr. Marian Michaels.

T: That is the name. Marian Michaels.

I: The man, the district superintendent?

T: Yes madam that is the man.

I: That's why you couldn't get that Michaels off of your mind.

T: Marian. Michaels.

J: So he played a big role in getting that?

T: Yes sir he did.

I: He sure did.

T: And then there was two churches up that a way that gave 5,000 dollars with no—

J: No strings attached at all? Outright gift?

T: Outright gift. Two churches up that a way. I can't name them. They might be in some of my...but anyway they gave five thousand dollars. And now to make this story short—

I: [Laughs] you can't make it much shorter. I mean it's long enough.

T: I made three or four maybe five payments. 100 dollar payments. But you know when I paid it all. Finished paying it up a thousand dollars off was when I went to work for Walter Smith after he come. And they paid me 100 dollars a month. I retired then from farming. 100 dollars a month and I give them back 50 dollars a month till I paid the 1,000 dollars off. Yes sir.

I: We think an awful lot of the minister we have right now.

T: And—

J: Reverend [Pat]?

I: Reverend [Pat]. He can't he—some of them asked me how I like him. I just said, "Well I just don't think he can be beat." He's in my book he's tops.

J: He's been there what 18 years?

I: Part of a while. He says he's gonna—when he retires he's gonna retire from there.

J: That's what he told me this morning. That's right. He wants to stick it out.

I: He did tell you that? He told me that. He said well when he left it was going to come from [inaudible]. Well [Reverend] I sure hope you come back he said.

T: What [inaudible phrase].

J: Pardon?

T: When is he retiring?

J: He wants to stay here for another I think it's two years.

I: Yeah.

J: That will be it. He will then retire.

I: Yeah so. I was thinking I hope everybody likes him because I sure do.

T: And then I was I don't know why I was put on the administrative board for 30 years. Now that's in on record. Well [the record].

I: When you are—what do you call it—

T: And Dale [Inaudible]...had contacted me and I'd been thinking about it. Asking to be relieved from that office. I was getting on in years. A lot of the meetings were at night time. So Dale [Inaudible] contacted me one Sunday. And asked a question. He said, "Mr. Thompson, you've been on the administrative board for years. How would you like to be relieved from it?" I said, "Dale it'd suit me fine." I've been thinking about it. I said, "It should be somebody who will attend their meeting and take a part in the church. Wilber Hancock overheard it. He said, "No sir, no you're not taking Mr. Thompson off." And he confirmed with Pat [inaudible phrase]. But then they got together all the officials in it, the head [inaudible] and discussed it. So Pat then put me on as the....

J: What they call emeritus?

T: Huh?

J: Did they call you a member emeritus?

I: No not that. What is that? He still a member but he's—

T: Honorary.

J: Honorary oh.

I: Honorary yeah.

T: Honorary member. And I don't think I've been to a meeting since.

J: Really honorary huh?

I: Well it's at night time you know and we don't do much driving after dark.

T: [No he says well we won't throw him away. We'll make him an honorary member]. Well this [Howl McDowell] he was only a member.

J: Now when you left Montgomery county and first came down here you went to Bethel for a while?

I: Yeah.

J: Who were your friends and neighbors that went to Bethel then? Who were these people?

T: [Inaudible] Wolf.

I: [Lyon]. You said [Lyon's.]

J: [Lyon's.]

I: [Lyon's] and Wolf's.

T: Rolland.

I: Rolland's. Oh a lot of people that I—

J: Any Ryce's?

I: Yes indeed.

T: Ryce's, Ryce's [Harry] Ryce and his family.

I: I didn't know him.

J: Did you know Sam Ryce by any chance? Samuel Wilson Ryce?

I: I don't know if we did or not. I don't know if I knew him by that name or not. I probably knew him but—

J: Well his daughter married Hayden. His daughter's still living. Kermit Hayden's mother was a Ryce.

I: Oh I know him, I know Kermit's mother.

J: Well she was a Ryce and her father was Samuel Wilson Ryce and her grandfather is buried in that cemetery.

I: Is that right? Yeah I knew who Mrs. Hayden was. We got—there was a lot of people and a lot of them maybe I didn't, don't remember their name. But you know there never was a very big turnout at that church.

J: What would be the average Sunday attendance at Bethel in 1945 or 6?

I: Looked like about 25 or 30 maybe. They wanted to be—

T: That was [inaudible phrase].

I: I believe it would.

J: Was there a Sunday school there too at that time?

T: Yes they had a Sunday school.

J: Where did the Sunday school meet?

T: In the church.

I: They had it in.

T: Often different [times] at church.

J: Okay was there a balcony in that building at any time?

I: No.

T: Yes there was.

I: Was there?

J: Where? Where was it located?

I: I didn't think there was a balcony. I don't know. I don't remember.

T: [It never had one of those a balconies. No I don't believe so.]

J: No second floor?

I and T: No, no, no.

T: But it was a [Inaudible] [back end] of the [inaudible]. It was a light pine and it [kettle] [inaudible] and each piece would meet right in the center of the alter.

J: Light pine?

T: Light pine.

J: What was the lighting like in this church?

T: [Coal light, cold off].

J: Kerosene lamp?

I: Kerosene lamp.

T: Kerosene light mhm.

J: Was there a chandelier in—

I: I don't remember.

T: Yes there was. There was a chandelier.

I: I believe there was a chandelier. It seems to me it was yes.

J: Any side lights along the walls?

I: On the walls [some lights].

T: Yeah some lights on the wall that right.

J: But no electricity?

T: No electricity.

J: Where was the heating system? How did you heat it?

T: Wood stove.

I: Wood stoves.

T: They had two.

I: Big iron, cast iron stoves.

T: Big iron.

J: Where were they placed in the room?

I: They were divided. One was on like a....

T: One was....

I: Back towards the cemetery on the side the cemetery was on. And then I don't know where the other one was. Back there some way. It was Bethel was a big floor. It's a large....

J: A large big single room.

I: Yeah single room it was.

J: Was it ever really warm in cold weather? Could they keep and make it comfortable?

T: No.

J: All that heat would go way up in that high ceiling?

T: Yeah that's right yes.

J: What were the windows like do you recall? Were there some decent looking windows? Gothic?

I: Yeah there was.

J: With top [inaudible]—

I: I think if I'm making no mistake it was.

J: Colored glass?

T: Yeah...no.

I: I don't know.

T: Not the [main] windows of the sanctuary were on the sides. Just plain, one pane glass.

I: I don't remember.

T: But it had a glass in front of painted—

J: What they call a rose window huh? Large round stained glass.

T: Right.

J: Whatever became of that?

I: Lord only knows.

T: I don't know.

I: Did they bring something from over there to up here?

J: Yes I did. My wife and I brought it from Dentsville. They stored it. They took it out of the Bethel church when it was torn down, brought it over to Dentsville and stored it in that empty church. When Roberta and I found out about it in 1966 we went out there with somebody else and a pick up truck and brought it back here and it's now installed in the tower.

T: Well I'll be—

J: Did you know that?

I: No I didn't.

J: That's a shame that people don't know how some of these things happen. That's the historic old stained glass rose window from Bethel.

I: Oh really?

J: Facing west from here.

T: I declare.

J: These things are not passed along from one Minister to another. And those small pictures of the old ministers like this you know? We did that. My wife and I found those and then got the church to put up some money to buy the frames and have them framed.

T: I declare.

I: Is that right?

J: Nobody knows that. We've been working on the history of that church for 25 years. So that's what happened to the beautiful Dentsville stained glass window. It is here now in the present building.

I: Is that right?

J: Yeah. Well what's been happening in the La Plata area since you people have been here? What was La Plata like in the 1940's? Where did you do most of your shopping when you were going to Dentsville? Surely you weren't coming all the way to La Plata were you during that first year or so?

T: New Market.

I: New Market had a—Waldorf place was—

T: Staple groceries, staple.

J: Right yeah. Did you shop at Hughesville ever?

T: Yeah we did some shopping at Hughesville.

I: We shopped around different places.

T: We shopped like that. But the most of [P.S] Bowling.

I: [Inaudible phrase].

J: Okay right in La Plata.

T: Right in La Plata. Most of it right in La Plata.

I: And then [inaudible] at the A&P store we did our groceries there at the A&P when we'd go.

T: I became acquainted with a lot of the old—don't you know I don't know nobody in La Plata no more.

I: Not very many people anyways.

T: I mean.

J: Who were some of those that you did know during the 40's and 50's? Who were some of your favorite La Plata people? Business people.

T: Bowling, [Nelly].

J: [Lion] and Nelly's store.

T: Yeah [Lion] and Nelly. You know my favorite people in La Plata? They gone. They're Rudolph Carrico and Tom. Southern Maryland Bank.

J: Who was there? Who worked in Southern Maryland Bank?

T: You know I have been trying to think of recalling the name of the president but anyway Wilson [Bowling].

J: Wilson Bowling?

T: Wilson Bowling's brother he was president but there was another man who had you know I can't recall the name. And I like him. Well I liked all of them, all them.

J: Was he an officer in the bank?

T: Yeah, yeah.

I: All of them were nice to us.

J: Who would you go to to borrow money? Who was their loan officer for example? Not that you ever did but if you had to borrow money who would you talk with?

T: I did business borrowing from, so far as borrowing, with the....

[Tape Interruption]

J: George Sullivan?

T: George Sullivan was the vice—president.

J: At Hughesville?

T: At Hughesville. Yes sir.

J: Did you ever shop in Bowling's store there in Hughesville?

T: Yes we did occasionally. [If we have to go it]—

J: That man is still living you know and he's your age. He's just your age. His name is George Bowling.

I: Is that right?

J: I'm very unhappy that I can't talk to him but he won't let me talk with him. Or his family won't I don't know. Well who were some of the other people that you used to bump into on the street of La Plata? How about Mr. Mudd the Lawyer, John Mudd? Did you ever meet John Mudd?

T: Yeah and Chip Mudd.

J: And Chip.

T: He was the president of the bank out on—he was on the same [side as Bowling's on there].

J: Okay yeah that bank was part of the building now.

I: Yeah.

T: That's right. That's right.

J: The door was at the corner. Corner door.

T: And Chip Mudd he sold insurance. His biggest [customers] was the [colored]. And after [bank] [inaudible] he'd go out on the [corner] and you'd see people the colored people gathering around him. You wondered what's going on. He'd sell them two or three dollars of insurance. [Laughs]. Yeah and—

J: Did you know Mr. Hawkins? [Holland] Hawkins?

T: Yes indeed.

J: You met him?

T: Yes indeed and Mr. Joe Mudd. He was a farmer.

I: Mr. [Hockett]—did you say [Hockett]?

J: Hawkins.

I: Oh Hawkins.

T: Hawkins.

J: H—

T: H. H. Hawkins.

I: H. H. Hawkins oh yeah.

T: H. H. Hawkins.

J: What did he look like as a man? How would you describe him?

T: You know he developed bad had a heart condition. I'm thinking who would I describe him by.

J: Thin, fat?

T: Huh?

J: Was he a thin man or?

T: No he was a medium sized man. Very fair complexion. What a lovely man he was. I bought my first automobile in [Charles] from him.

J: A genteel sophisticated old school type?

T: Yeah, yeah that's right.... Madeline Mitchell. You know I just recently met a daughter of Mr. Mitchell's run the shop there.

J: The Plymouth garage? The Plymouth garage or you mean the [MSI] Mitchell?

T: The garage in there.

J: Oh Max, Maxwell Mitchell.

T: Max.

J: Yeah his daughter is Courtney.

T: [Then right after] the doctor, eye doctor's office, Doctor Tom's office. That's [inaudible phrase].

J: Is that right? I just saw her a few days ago. Courtney Mitchell Wilson, Mrs. Wilson. And that's Max or Jake's sister.

I: Yeah I think I saw her when she came out of those apartments.

J: What was the old A&P store like in La Plata? You were in that a few times.

I: Oh yes. I can't think of—I can't remember, but there was a man that was in there that was about so tall and he was about this big around.

J: I know what his name was.

T: Gus.

I: What was his name?

J: It was Owen.

T: Gus Owen.

I: Huh?

T: Gus Owen.

I: Gus Owen.

J: He was the manager?

I: He was the manager—

T: He was the manager.

J: And what did he look like now?

I: He was—

J: Short?

I: No. He was—

T: He was short and chubby.

I: But he was nice.

J: Good to deal with?

I: Yes he was.

T: Yes he was a nice fellow. He would talk a bit.

J: Did you know any of his family? Did you know—

T: No, no not them.

J: His sister's still living up there.

I: Is that right?

J: See he was a veteran of World War I, Thurman. Like as you are a Navy veteran.

T: He was? Well—

J: What were the big hardware stores in La Plata when you first came during that first five years?

T: You know I can't remember...[Posey's] hardware was there and just recently went out of business.

J: Yeah that's true. I think—

T: I don't know who has it now—

J: I think Mitchell ran it for a while. One of the Mitchell's was in the hardware business.

T: I believe you're right. Some of the Mitchell's, yeah.

J: When you first arrived in town. What kind of fuel did you burn there at the house near Mechanicsville? Wood, coal, oil?

T: Where?

J: When you first arrived in St. Mary's County.

I: We had wood to heat but we had a gas stove, cooking stove.

T: Yeah we had a gas stove for cooking.

I: And I believe we had a wood stove too.

T: We had a wood stove.

J: So you guys went to La Plata more often than you went down to say Leonardtown? Did you ever go to Leonardtown for anything?

I: Not after we got out of Leonardtown.

T: After we left that first year down there.

I: When we got back this way we didn't go very far that way.

T: I don't believe I've been to another town in four years—oh yes I have. I've been to [Inaudible].

I: Yeah, yeah. With the nursing there [went to see folks.]

J: Who was your family doctor here?

T: Doctor Woody.

I: Doctor Woody has been our doctor since we've been down here in Charles County.

J: So he's obviously taken good care of you.

I: Well he had just come out of the service and set up a [inaudible]. That's where we first started to—

J: What building was he in?

I: It was—what building is that? It says something about children I believe now. It was in the building across the street. Somewhere across from Roy [Roger's] place.

J: Oh down there.

I: It was there. Yes I know what you mean there's a nursery building there of some sort.

I: There is and he wanted to have his office there. And when he was coming there we were still in up in—

J: Near Croom, Naylor.

I: Naylor yes.

J: Okay.

T: Yes.

I: And we've been—he's been our doctor ever since.

T: And I must say, well I can't say nothing else. He has taken good care of me.

I: He sure has.

T: He looks like he's hit weak spots.

J: Where have you been taking your automobile for service now for the past 30 years or so, 35 years?

T: Well this machine [inaudible] on the in the garage, car port.

J: I've seen that around for quite a while. What year is that Thurman?

T: 69.

J: 69 Plymouth?

T: [Inaudible]. I was in Waldorf at the [Harry's] Motors.

I: Well what [inaudible phrase] who picks it up for you.

T: Huh?

I: He wants to know who does your work on it for you.

J: Who've been your favorite mechanics down through the years in the La Plata?

T: I've never had a uniform mechanic until just recently.

J: Oh really?

T: [That's right] anymore you know changing oils or—

I: Tire.

T: Tire or that's all. But I did not have a mechanic. Just recently we were got into La Plata and [looked like made it] [inaudible] so I turned it over to Martin.

J: Okay Martin. Is that Martin [Sheron] now?

T: Right. I turned it over to him and Martin got into it and darned if he didn't put it in number one shape.

J: Did you know a [snorter] Martin's father, Frank? Yeah did you know him?

T: Old man Frank grey many times he's hollered at me.

J: How would you describe him Thurman?

T: I'm gonna tell you Mr. Wearmouth he was a marvelous man. He had to admired. He was a [rough sailor].

J: Did you know he was a good baseball player in his day?

T: No I did not.

J: Well he was.

T: Well I'll be darned.

J: Played on the La Plata baseball team quite a few years.

I: Is that right? Oh Thurman, was Mrs. Bowling here? [Ms. Dick Bowling]? Wasn't she—

T: She was his daughter.

I: Daughter that's what I was thinking.

T: His wife was one of the finest looking ladies you will look at. Frank old man—

J: Franks?

T: Frank. Old man Frank. Girl was a fine looking lady and a fine [mate].

J: Did you ever buy a new car in La Plata?

T: No I bought this car from [Harry Bowling]. I was up there in the shop. Had a car in the shop and this carload of cars come in. They was unloading them and hen they was bringing this car down off the deck I said, "Harry, I want that one right there." He said, "Which one?" I said, "That green one." He hollered to a dealer, one of his dealers, he was a [inaudible]. Told him to take it to the—take it in to the service department. Next day he called me told me it was ready. So I went on up and turned my little [Valiant]...[inaudible] [wanted to take it] turned it in and drove that back home and been driving it ever since. And no mechanic has ever been in that hood until Martin went under.

J: Is that the slant head six?

T: Huh?

J: Is that what they call the slant head six?

T: That's right.

J: That's one of the classical engines of all time. You got a good one.

T: Six of them.

J: Six on it.

I: Yeah it sure has been.

J: You got a good one.

T: My people [depended on the rail] getting [inaudible phrase]. And brother George Wheeler said to me [some time go], he walked up and looked up at it and he says, "They must not be no part shop around nowhere." I said, "That's alright. I'll have them put on next year." Well he says, "I won't be around here." I said, "Are you gonna be around here?" "Well I hope so." Well I say, "He might be around here too." Yes sir we've had some good times. We've had some rough times. But they've all had rough. We've got our load.

J: How many of your children finished school here in Charles County?

I: [Less so].

T: Two.

I: And Peggy didn't finish in Charles County. She finished in Upper Marlborough.

T: Oh that's right she did.

I: And Alice...

T: She finished here.

I: Alice finished here. That's three of them I know.

T: And George, didn't he finish here? Yeah.

I: I guess he did.

T: And you know he went into the service.

I: Right on in the service yeah.

J: The boy that died during the war, where did he go to school?

I: He went to school in Montgomery County.

T: Montgomery County.

J: Montgomery County.

T: The two oldest ones.

I: The two oldest sons. One went—he went in the marines and the other one was supposed to go in the marines but he had bashed his hand or finger or something and he didn't pass for the marines so he went in the Navy. I've got them right up here. That's the oldest son and this is the one that we lost in the middle here. And that one over there he's down in Tennessee and he was in the—all of them was in service but Lester. Lester was too young.

J: And who's the one on the end? He looks familiar.

I: The big one?

J: Yeah.

I: That's Lester.

J: That's what I thought. He still lives near Port Tobacco?

I: Port Tobacco.

T: He was in the air [force].

I: Yeah, but you know they just got back from Florida, lived in Florida.

J: Who did her marry?

I: He married Roberta...

J: Bowie?

T: Bowie mhm.

I: Roberta Bowie.

J: My wife's name is Roberta so they remember.

T: That's right.

I: Roberta Bowie. And I have to say, I don't whether he would have ever found anybody else that would've taken the care of him that she has.

J: So Howard was her father?

I: Yes.

J: Howard Bowie was Roberta's father.

I: But she sure has taken good care of him. Course he's—his right arm you know is helpless. He can't use it and that's [inaudible].

J: That's a shame. So have the two of you been comfortable here in this county?

I: Oh yes.

T: Very.

J: Was it a good home for you?

I: Oh indeed so yes indeedy. Yes sir.

T: Very.

I: We feel like we're at home.

T: No complaints.

I; No complaints that's right.

T: No complaints.

I: And if nothing happens and Eddy [Grants] gets along okay with this operation our oldest daughter is coming up to Maryland to spend some time with us. And when he gets out—she's down there with him now but she's coming from their home.

J: I see. Now what year was she born? I suspect she's about my age.

I: Jane is I believe about my—about 60 or something like that. I don't really—really I have to look. Of course I'll tell you my mind gets scattered.

J: What year was the first child born?

I: 1922. We were married in March of 21 and then June of 22 he was born our son. [I conclude, I got my paper mixed up]. I got to find Jane.

J: So Thurman you this year are 94?

T: Yes sir 94.

J: What's been the all time greatest event of your life?

I: Jane was born 19—she was born 25.

J: I was born in 24.

I: Oh good.

T: My family—

I: Oh I'm telling a story.

T: I cannot—I couldn't ask for—

I: Yeah 25.

T: I couldn't ask for another family life with my family. I will tell you—I tried to tell you when they saw the building on the church in La Plata. Right off they put me on the building committee. The first building committee. And from then on I've been involved in nothing but [service] one way or another. And I had got so involved several times my wife had asked the question, "Do you want me to pack you a suitcase? Take it with you?"

J: That was the second wife huh?

T: That's right.

J: I suppose you met Mr. Frederick Tilp at one time or another?

T: Oh yes indeed. I knew [got along]. I didn't [inaudible].

J: He's gone you know.

T: My [presence] with the Methodist church has been the most pleasant time of my life.

J: You were raised a Baptist were you?

T: In a Baptist family. A Baptist family yessiree.

J: Now what church did you go to in Montgomery County?

T: A little Methodist church in Laytonville.

I: And there was a little Methodist church at—

J: Naylor?

I: Naylor.

J: Oh that's right.

I: I think it was a Methodist church. Yeah it was a Methodist church.

T: Yes indeed.

J: Who has been your all-time favorite Methodist preacher?

I: That'd be—

T: I can't go back on Walter Smith. I cannot—

J: Knowing you have a lot of respect for the present one Mr.—

T: That's right.

J: Beyond that you kind of lean toward Walter Smith?

T: Yes sir.

I: I didn't.

J: That's interesting.

I: It's because he worked with him and he knew him personally. I knew him personally too but I didn't know him as well as he did. But for Reverend [Pat] I don't what he did something to me.

J: Isn't that something that's great. And Reverend Kemp was sort of?

I: Yes I like Reverend Kemp alright.

T: I got along with Reverend Kemp yes sir I did. I got along with him.

J: Who preached at Bethel while you were there?

I: Reverend...

T: [Hoey].

I: [Hoey].

J: [Hoey]. Okay.

I: I don't think we had a—

T: It was a fine old gentleman. Fine old gentleman.

I: Oh yes. Oh yes.

J: Well how old were you Thurman when you retired for the first time from agriculture?

T: We had moved in here. Hadn't finished it but we had moved in. What year?

J: About how old were you?

T: I was 65 years old in February. I [inaudible phrase]. And in May somewhere along was the first of May, I witnessed a meadow lark and brought my mail on in and handed it to the wife. I

was busy down below there. She went through the mail and present she call me. She said, "You better come up here." And it was a letter from the Social Security Administration. I was eligible for Social Security and to report to the office on Sunday and that was the day.

J: They were keeping an eye on you.

T: Yeah they were keeping an eye on me it seemed like. So I went up there and I got my card, number four number five. And when I got to there and I was the next in line it was right up 12 o'clock. Well he went down there in his briefcase and he pulled out the records. He looked them over and he "Well," he says, "Your best five years." He said "Tell you," he said, "I'm going up and get a sandwich. Is your wife living?" I said, "Very much so." He said, "Well if you can get her up here there'll be money in your pocket."

J: I'll turn this off.

[Tape Interruption]

Well as a mother of ten children?

T: Ten children.

J: What did you do down through the years to see that they had a good diet? Were you concerned about this?

I: They ate what they wanted. Whatever they—I fixed whatever they liked and what I had to fix for them in those days you know.

J: Did you ever find it necessary to kind of force them to eat certain types of thing?

I: No you know I never did. I can see Lester now coming to the table with a loaf of bread, slice it and all he could hold in his hands just like that.

J: Oh for goodness sakes. And would he eat all that?

I: Most of the time. Most of the time. They were choice-y. You know some of them want—some like one thing and some didn't like it.

T: But if there were nothing else to put before them they went along with it.

I: They went along with you yeah they did. They ate it.

J: Did you have your own vegetable garden most of the years while you're farming?

I: Yes most of the time. All the time.

T: Oh yes.

J: Who did most of the work in that?

I: And I canned oh golly did I can.

J: Okay what was considered a good canning year? How many quarts in total and about how would you break that down?

I: Well those days I wasn't canning in quarts. I was canning in the half a gallon.

J: Oh okay.

I: You see the pressure cooker didn't come out that early and I had to—I used a big pot or whatever and have to put those jars down in that water and boil them for so many hours.

J: So you were canning even in Virginia?

I: Oh yes indeed.

J: Okay did the girls help you out?

I: Oh every one of them. They were good help.

J: Oh that's good.

I: That's why I'm so anxious now to have that older daughter to come on up here with me. And the one in Baltimore she comes down here and she turns things upside down when she comes.

J: Did you do much meat canning?

I: No, no he cured the meat. I didn't can the meat.

T: We did—we raised ours.

I: Raised our own.

T: Pork and hogs and butchered them. Beef we [hung it up and didn't eat out—put a in a bag and hang it up and] [inaudible phrase].

I: Salted up the pork and salted it down and then—

T: Bind it down and cured it.

I: Cured and then they would hang it up.

J: Did you find any differences between Nelson County and Charles County in curing ham?

T: Yes I did.

J: What were these differences now?

T: Charles County had a recipe. They used a lot of sugar, syrup, and cured the—particular the quarter ham and the shoulder.

I: Well that's when you bought the shoulder meat hams from the store up there where he works and brought it home and salted it down and put it away for. I guarantee she'll have a stuffed ham for Easter.

T: That's our old way of doing it.

I: Old way of doing things. But it's not the same. It's not all salt. It's something it's brown like brown sugar or something else mixed with it. It's a mixture.

T: Sugar cured.

I: Sugar cured that's right. Sugar cured.

J: Were there any differences in other food practices in preservation between what you'd learned as a girl and what they were doing up here?

I: Oh yeah there's a difference today too. I don't do half the things that I used to do. I've even got the old microwave out there and you know I used to have a wood stove.

J: You like that microwave?

I: No I'm not crazy about it. I don't use it very often.

J: What were some of the favorite meals that your children might ask for on a birthday? Someone might come in and say, "Mom I would like to have something a little special."

I: They didn't—

T: All of them liked that old ham.

I: They wanted a birthday cake of some kind.

T: Yeah a birthday cake.

I: You know they wasn't choice-y. Look no they whatever I fixed was alright with them.

J: So you were kind of lucky.

I: Mhm.

T: Every one of them, the boys particular, they loved seafood. Seafood, most any kind of seafood.

J: Anything out of the river for example?

T: Yeah, yeah.

J: Crabs, oysters.

I: Our oldest son was here for his birthday. Coming from North Carolina up here for his birthday. And he took us down to Captain John's down there on the water.

J: Cobb Island?

I: Cobb Island. And they had seafood.

T: And you what all our way down a fish dinner came to my mind.

I: He wanted fish.

T: Fish I thought. Don't you know when the lady, the waitress brought the menus out I opened it up oysters stew. I threw in on that oysters stew.

I: Oh I've never seen such a bowl of oysters.

T: You've never seen such a bowl of oysters.

J: At Captain John's?

T: Captain John's.

J: Yes I agree. It's wonderful down there. I've never seen better oyster stew. You're right.

I: It's a wonderful place. Good.

J: How did you handle your childhood illnesses? Was there anything extra serious as they were coming along?

I: Yes. One time Thurman had—what did you have the measles or what was it you had? Measles and Winston got sick and—

J: And how old was Thurman at the time?

I: Oh Thurman was grown. We were married. We had [inaudible]—

T: I hope we was married since Winston was there.

I: Yeah Winston was a little boy. He was about three. Well he come down got sick and we couldn't tell what was wrong with him. Had the doctor come and just kept feeding pills into him and all that stuff and the child was getting worse all the time. And some people don't believe in stomach worms but now I'm telling you he was one that does. Because I told Thurman, I said, "Thurman there's something wrong." He kept picking his blankets you know and pulling it up around. I said, "I'm gonna"—there was a medicine that they called a vermifuge. That was the worm medicine. And I don't know I had it in the house—

T: No you send me to the—

I: Had to send to the store and get it. But you did it cross the county. You didn't have to have—

J: You were living here then?

I: No we were living in Virginia. And I said I'm going to stop giving him that medicine the doctor left for him and I'm going to give him a dose of the vermifuge tonight. Oh lord have mercy.

J: What happened.

I: Oh they the things come out his nose. I mean and they didn't come out just one at a time. They were tied like in knots.

J: Good lord.

T: Now that is the truth.

I: That's the truth. They were balled up like in a knot.

J: And that drove them right—

[Tape Ends]