Transcript of OH-00139

Catherine I. Swann

Interviewed by

John Wearmouth

on

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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

Agriculture
Canning and preserving
Rural conditions
Medicine, Rural
Traditional medicine
Typhoid fever

Tags

Food preservation

Transcript

[Note: Francis Swann also speaks throughout part of the interview and was not close enough to a microphone for his voice to be reliably picked up by this audio recording.]

John Wearmouth [J]: This is John Wearmouth interviewing Catherine I. Swann at her home on [Old] Sycamore Road. The mailing address is Charlotte Hall but we are quite a few miles from there at this point. We're down towards the south eastern corner of Charles County as a matter of fact. We're probably as close to Chaptico as Charlotte Hall here.

Catherine I. Swann [C]: Newport.

J: Newport, how far are we from Newport?

C: Not much over a mile.

J: Okay well that [narrows] it down. The date is March 3, 1988. This interview is part of the Charles County Community College Oral History Program and we're going to be talking to Mrs. Swann about her life in this part of the county and also in that bit of St. Mary's County over in the Mechanicsville neighborhood. And she's been in Charles County since 1927?

C: Right coming to 1968 when retired and moved in St. Mary's. And then I moved back here in 19—well I've been here five years so that would 1883—1983.

J: Okay her father was William Preston Higgs and her mother Maude Burroughs Higgs and looks like the entire family had its roots in the Mechanicsville neighborhood.

C: Right my parents.

J: Okay how far back in memory can you go Mrs. Swann? Do you remember some events of your very, very young childhood at home? How many children were there?

C: 10 in my family.

J: And where did you fall in that group? Young?

C: I had four brothers older and two sisters older. Then I had the other brothers were younger of course.

J: So when you came along your mother had some help from the older ones? When was the first child born roughly?

C: Let's see my mother was 20 years old...In 93....

J: So your oldest brother would be considerably older than you were?

C: Oh my yes.

J: Considerably.... So from the very first you lived on a farm?

C: Right.

J: And your father was a full time farmer. Did he do anything else to bring money in?

C: No.

J: Okay. When did you start school? The usual age?

C: I started school in September and I was six in December.

J: Okay so you got a good early start. Were you able to walk to school from home?

C: Oh yes.

J: What was the name of the school?

C: Longwood.

J: Longwood.

C: That was for lower Mechanicsville.

J: Near what road?

C: It was between Chaptico and Mechanicsville. I don't think roads in those days had a name.

J: Unless they were major roads. What outstanding things happened there on the farm when you were little? Anything very pleasant or unpleasant? The things that once in a while come back to your memory about those years when you were say five years old or younger?

C: Well our house was sort of a gathering place for the young people in the wintertime. My father played the violin and they all came on Saturday nights and rolled up the living room carpet and danced. My father and his brother played the violin. We had an ice pond they called them in those days because we had ice houses. They was built like a cellar in the ground with a roof over it. The ice would have to get at least six or eight inches thick and they'd cut it blocks and dump it in the cellar and put straw in between it and we had ice all the whole summer through for ice cream and cold drinks.

J: How far was the cellar away from the house?

C: Oh about as far as it is from here to the top of the hill with the [inaudible]. Now what would you say Frank?

Francis Swann [F]: [The equivalent] [inaudible].

J: Was it quite a deep whole?

C: Oh yes like a basement under a house only deeper.

J: Were the walls of dirt or was it bricked in?

C: Yes, no it was just dirt.

J: Just plain dirt.

C: Yeah it was clay. They always looked for a place up on the hill where there were clay so it would be solid.

J: And it had a wooden roof on it?

C: A wooden roof. An A shaped roof.

J: One door with any windows at all ever?

C: No just one door and a ladder to go down in there and get the ice.

J: Did you ever crawl down in there as a little girl?

C: Oh many times. Fell down in there too.

J: Oh I bet. That's quite a drop wasn't it?

C: Well there was a lot of straw there.

J: Oh that helps. I wonder if the winters today are cold enough to give you that kind of ice?

C: I don't believe it.

J: So it had to be at least six inches thick?

C: At least.

J: And how did you cut it?

C: With axes and saws, handsaws.

F: [Inaudible phrase] [ice saws].

J: So that was a good, some good winter time job that got you all warmed up

C: Right.

J: How far away from the house was the ice pond?

C: Oh about twice as far as the ice house [inaudible].

J: So it was pretty convenient?

C: But all that is gone now it's still in the Burroughs family. It belonged to grandfather or great grandfather.

J: So this was your mother's side?

C: Right. And the young people did quite a bit of ice skating.

J: When did you last ice skate? About how old were you?

C: Oh I'd say about 18.

J: Think you could do it today?

C: I doubt it.

J: So how large was this room where young people danced?

C: Oh I'd say about 17 by 18 feet.

J: That's a pretty good size room.

C: Yes it was.

J: And your father was a violinist and who else?

C: His brother Leo Higgs.

J: And he played the violin as well? Was there a piano?

C: No indeed just the two violins.

J: Do you remember the names of some of the dances?

C: Not really because they were like square dances you know. Paul Jones and....

J: Any reels?

C: Oh yes but I can't remember the names.

J: So it was a real group dance. Were most of them dances where you had partners?

C: Oh yes always.

J: One boy and one girl. Not like today, you're not sure who's dancing with who.

C: They did a lot of waltzing those days too. Old time waltzing.

J: And the young people enjoyed the waltzes too?

C: Oh yes very much so.

J: Do you remember anything called a schottische?

C: Not really.

J: Well I guess that wasn't popular in this part of the country. A polka?

C: Polka yeah we did that.

J: And there were jigs too?

C: Oh yes.

J: Was that something that the young people really looked forward to?

C: Oh sure in wintertime that was great. And then in summer we'd go to church and come home and meet at our house and we'd have ice cream, the neighborhood. That was the gathering place.

J: How did you make your ice cream from start to scratch?

C: We had one—right, one of those old hand turners you know. Whoever made the last turn got to lick the paddle.

J: In the soft salt attitude pieces of ice which was had to break up I suppose to go into that.

C: Right certain kind of [cold].

J: [Inaudible phrase] [metal] was the outside of the ice cream maker made of wood do you remember?

C: Yes it was.

J: Okay like a wooden bucket and the inside can?

C: Metal can inside.

J: And then a crank?

C: Right.

J: Okay what were your flavor favorites?

C: Well mostly vanilla because in the summer when we had peaches you know fruit. We had you know strawberries and peaches and whatever.

J: Okay what foods were produced on the farm? Do you remember?

C: Well we had quite a variety of vegetables.

J: What did your father or mother normally plant first? About this time of the year they could probably start planting the early crops. What did they try and get in?

C: You mean in the vegetable line?

J: In the vegetable line right.

C: Well I guess corn. And we used to have a frost proof cabbage plant we planted early. And peas, yes peas and onions and beets. The latter part of March to early April.

J: What sort of food preservation did your family do at home?

C: Canned everything. There were no freezers, no electricity.

J: What systems of preservation did they use other than canning? Any drying or salting?

C: Well yes we used to dry apples and cherries and we salted the pork.

J: What sort of preservation was used for the pork? Any particular type of....

F: [Usually we'd use plain salt and then a mixture of—]

C: My dad used a lot of brown sugar.

J: And brown sugar.

C: Salt and brown sugar.

J: Salt and then brown sugar?

C: Right.

J: Which went on first or at the same time?

C: Same time he mixed the salt and brown sugar together.

J: Okay then how long would the hams stand with that on them?

C: Well he would pack them in a barrel and it raised a brine like and most of the time it would come over top of them and then they would hang it up in—but they last to February. And rub it real good with borax to keep the insects off.

J: Where did you normally hang these, the pork?

C: We had a smoke house.

J: Okay an outdoor thing.

C: Right.

J: So it didn't make any difference whether it was freezing out or fairly warm. It was so well preserved it would just keep until through the next summer?

F: [Yes most of the year it'd keep].

J: Okay how much beef was produced on the farm? Any for eating?

C: Usually in January when it was real cold we would butcher a beef and they would also I guess brine that. But we couldn't use right away you know. Sometimes you could hang it in the smoke house and it would freeze and stay frozen for months.

J: Was any of the beef corned beef?

C: Yes corned beef.

J: Okay and what went into preserving it that way what was process?

C: Just salt.

F: Salt or anything that you like—[it was called brining sitting in brine].

J: What had to be kept chilled? Did your mother have an ice box in the house?

C: No we did not. Not when I was young. Well in years later we did. An old wooden—you put the ice in the top of it.

J: Was there a spring on the property where she could put things to be kept?

C: Right we had a box and the water running through it.

J: I see and that was out in the yard someplace in the shade?

C: Well not close, not real close to the house but—

F: [Inaudible phrase] had a well that went down [inaudible phrase].

C: In a bucket with a top on it. Or take it up to the ice house. We used to take it up and put it in the ice house because it was always cold in there. Fastened up and canned. We used to get syrup in gallon buckets and they always saved them to put your butter after it was wrapped in there and let it down in the ice house.

J: This was a tin bucket of some sort?

C: Right.

J: Those with a handle on—

C: Used to get King's syrup I believe it was.

J: There is still that brand. Using sugar I mean corn syrup.

C: But in a large family they always bought in big quantities you know. Especially in the winter.

J: And lard? Did your mother?

C: Oh mother made lard yes.

J: She made it.

C: And carried the wheat to the mill and ground their own flour. In the winter you had a barrel of flour and a barrel of sugar and a barrel of syrup to cook with.

J: To get you pretty much through the winter?

C: If we had a snow storm that you couldn't get anywhere you know with the horse and buggy.

F: We bought molasses in a 50 gallon wooden barrel. It was a large family.

J: Huh? Were most of these barrels of the 50 gallon size made of wood?

C: Right.

J: And where did she keep these barrels? Close to the kitchen in an outhouse?

C: No they always had a large pantry. You kept that stuff in the pantry.

J: What about dairy products? Did you produce your own milk there at the farm most of the time?

C: Always.

J: And the boys did most of the milking?

C: Well I did it too.

J: Did you too?

C: Oh my yes.

J: How many girls were there again?

C: Three girls and seven boys.

J: Now what were the jobs of the girls primarily?

C: Well—

J: What did your mother and father expect of you young ladies there at home?

C: Well I was like a tomboy I didn't do much housework until my two older sisters were married and moved away and then I had to take over. One of the boy's duties was to hitch the oxen to a cart. I helped. He would hitch a horse to a plow I helped. I loved it.

J: Did you like that?

C: Oh yes I loved it and ride horse back. We'd go in the fields and get on the horses with no bridle or anything on them just race them over the fields.

J: Did you ever take a bad tumble off the animal?

C: No never did. Only one time I fell off the ox cart and broke my arm. The brothers were hauling tobacco in from the field.

J: And you got up high on the load?

C: Too high.

J: So the mighty had fallen at that point. What did your mother say about that?

C: Well she was pretty upset of course because the doctors were a long ways away and it was horse and buggy to travel. And made the splints out of an old orange crate.

J: Your mother did herself?

C: No the doctor [Sothoron].

J: Which doctor was this now?

C: Doctor [Sothoron]. His father was an Episcopal minister.

J: And how far away was he from your home?

C: Oh 15 miles at least.

J: So that was serious. If you had a serious illness [less] time to get to him. Do you ever recall an instance of someone in the family going for the doctor and then finding out that he wasn't home? He was out somewhere else on a call?

C: I don't remember.

J: How many illnesses were there among the children growing up?

C: Well back in World War I the worst was the influenza. The whole family had it except my father.

J: Did any of your brothers get into the service during World War I?

C: Yeah my older brother.

J: Did he get to France?

C: Oh yes he was over there quite a while.

J: And back?

C: Oh yeah.

J: And what was his name?

C: William.

J: William.

C: I have a younger brother who was second World War.

J: Almost like another generation. About what year was the youngest child born?

C: 1917.

J: So about 1893 or 4 and 1917 the children were born so that was quite a stretch. About a 23 old stretch in which your mother was kept pretty busy doing things other than working in the kitchen and keeping an eye on all these kids. How much help was your dad around the house? Men in those days weren't too likely to be found doing housework were they?

C: Well not really because when I can remember there were older brothers and sisters to help.

J: What did your father expect of his sons? Aout what age were these boys when they began to really pull their weight and get out in the field and drive a team and help with the plowing and harrowing and all that.

C: I guess around the age of 12.

J: Were they expected to pretty much do a man's work in the field at that age?

C: Well I'm sure pretty much so.

J: When they went out into the field to work and they were fairly far away from the house did your mother send some sort of a lunch with them?

C: No they came home to eat. Always came back to eat. She would send cold drinks. Maybe a snack in the afternoon.

J: What was considered a good lunch for a hard working group of men in the summer?

C: Well we didn't have lunches we had two dinners. My relatives always said we had quite a large meal in the middle of the day because when they ate breakfast at six o'clock in the morning by 11 o'clock they were hungry.

J: And then a fairly heavy meal again at the end of the day?

C: In the evening right.

J: Normal—

F: [We'd eat dinner—we called dinner then about six o'clock in the evening] [inaudible sentence].

J: We're talking about 12 or 16 hour days in the middle of harvest.

C: Absolutely.

F: Depends on what you know what—different thing was going on that farm. Was it harvest time or something being done. You put in two days instead of one.

J: What were the big money crops when you were growing up?

C: Tobacco.

J: That was far and away the big money crop okay. Do you remember how many acres your father had to take care of?

C: No I really don't.

J: What would you guess? A dozen acres?

F: I'd say around it because the acreage there [inaudible phrase].

J: Okay in those days 12 acres would mean a lot of work for what three men? At harvest time do you remember other people being brought in from outside to help for a day or two?

C: Well the neighbors helped. Two of them had the tobacco ready first they would help one another.

J: Who were some of your neighbor families around that you felt pretty close to?

C: Well they were relatives. The Burroughs family and the Higgs's. We were surrounded by relatives.

J: Surrounded by each other huh.

C: Right.

J: Okay. What were the names of some of the other large families within say half a mile of where your family lived?

C: Well my Uncle Luther Burroughs had eight children. And Uncle Leo Higgs had five. And Mr. Zack [Gray] had I'd say eight.

J: And this wasn't unusual the average number would be what about six at that time in that neighborhood?

C: Six to eight and more.

J: And a family of a dozen children that wasn't considered unusually large?

C: No it wasn't.

J: [Inaudible sentence]. Was the family normally quite healthy? Did your father ever suffer any accidents on the farm that put him out of action?

C: None whatever.

J: That was an accomplishment getting to life on a farm in those days without damaging one limb or another. How old was your dad when he passed away?

C: He was born in 1863 and he died in 1956.

J: So he lived—

C: 93.

J: A good long life.

C: He went to bed on his 93rd birthday and never got out in the morning. He died in August. His birthday was in July. And he could read and tell history. He just read all the time. He loved to read.

J: Did he have a good memory?

C: Very good.

J: That's great.

F: [He was my history book when I went to him].

J: That's marvelous. Do you remember any stories your father told you that he got from his father and mother?

C: Well so many things I can remember that's really interesting. My grandmother on my father's side had the first wood stove to bake in. They baked on these old sliders in the oven in the fire places. And all the neighbors came to see the stove. She was the first one to have a stove to bake in.

J: A totally enclosed iron stove?

C: Right one of the first in the neighborhood.

J: Do you have any feel for what year that might have been?

C: I wouldn't have the slightest.

J: [Inaudible] about the 1840's or so. Which would be about—

C: Well he was born in 1863.

J: And this was his grandmother?

C: This was his mother. My grandmother.

J: His mother? Okay that would be about right 1850, 60.

F: [Inaudible] in those days you know [inaudible phrase] 30, 40 years [inaudible] a lot of the farmers [were rich from the 40's]. [Inaudible phrase] [four to six] years later [inaudible].

J: What are some of the other things that you might have heard your father and mother tell about?

C: Well they read by the light of the fire place a lot and they made candles themselves from mutton tallow, they called it. Of course they raised a lot of sheep in those days.

J: Sheep fats.

C: Right.

J: Did those cast off any odor as they burned?

C: I have no idea because when—

J: Did you ever smell one?

C: No not really.

J: Did your father feel that farm people in Southern Maryland were making progress? Did you ever hear him express himself on that? Any complaints at all about how hard he had to work?

C: Never he never complained. He never complained.

J: The truth is he probably worked just as hard as his grandfather and great-grandfather. The same tools, animal power, no electricity. Did your father live long enough to see these things come to pass?

C: Oh yes. He lived with me for 17 years after my mother passed away.

F: He died in 1953 so—

J: Oh he saw his—

C: 1956.

J: Think of that. Think of that. Did he ever mention anything that happened in his neighborhood back as far as the Civil War? Any stories that his father might have told him?

C: Not really.

J: Wouldn't it be nice to have done a tape recording like this with him? It's all gone except what you can remember.

F: His memory was just like a tape too. [Inaudible sentence].

J: And all we have now is what people like you can remember that he said. When did—how old was he when he gave up farming?

C: Well I guess when he came to live with us in 1936. He helped my husband you know like weeding tobacco and stripping tobacco and things like that but he didn't farm on his own. There were only the boys at home.

J: He was in his 70's then?

C: Right.

F: [He was cutting tobacco when he was 85 years old]. Not cutting but [inaudible phrase].

J: Okay now how did you meet your husband?

C: At a dance.

J: At a dance where?

C: Chaptico.

J: Okay now we got to try and get you up to the Charles County. Was there a grange hall there or a church where the dances were held?

C: It was some sort of a grange. I've forgotten what it was called but the Episcopal Church it had their dinners and dances.

J: Incidentally was the grange a big thing when you were a young girl in your neighborhood?

C: Not really.

J: It may already have started to go down.

F: [Inaudible sentence].

C: Woodmen of the world. That's who owned the halls.

J: So where was your husband born and raised.

C: In Charles County right over here on DuBois Road.

J: So we're not far from his roots.

C: Right. The farm belonged to his grandfather. His father bought it and then Frank and I bought it.

J: Did it have a name originally? Did it have an old name of any sort at all?

C: I believe the old deed is in laying in that little green box.

F: [Inaudible sentence].

C: Do you want to go in there and look in that little green box that belonged to my daddy? I believe that old deed's in there unless I put it in the safety deposit box. On the shelf in the bedroom where I sleep.

J: Was his house near the one that's up the hill? The very old one where the Sam's lived?

C: Go right in past that. It's Trinity Lake and they have a no trespassing sign back there now.

J: Okay so your father's house was farther back?

C: That was my husband's father.

J: You husband's father okay.

C: It was the latest farm back in there joined to English on the far end.

J: So he talked you into coming to Charles County did he?

C: Oh yes when we were married we moved with his mother because she was a widow and he was managing the farm.

J: They were living over there then?

C: Right in the homeplace and when she passed away we bought it in 1932.

J: Okay now what year were you married?

C: 1927.

J: And you were about 21?

C: I was 19 in December married in February.

J: Okay and how old was he at the time?

C: 27.

J: So he had been looking for you for a little while. Did you ever have a chance to get acquainted with the young people he had grown up with? You must have been—

C: Quite a few of them.

J: Your family and neighbors. Did you find them changed much from those you'd known in Mechanicsville?

C: Not at all.

J: The same lifestyle, the same problems.

C: Very friendly people.

J: Now were you an Episcopalian at the time?

C: All my life.

J: And what was the name of your church when you were growing up?

C: All Faith.

J: All Faith. And then when you came into Charles County you became what?

C: Joined Trinity.

J: Okay that's right down the road. Who were some of your first neighbors here in Charles County? Your first friends.

C: Samuel Dyson and his family. William and Preston Dyson. And George Moran's family and Mr. Walter Sinclair. And they're all such friendly people. They just—like in harvest time they just all got together and helped one another and we fixed a big meal like a picnic.

J: And made some fun out of it.

C: Right.

J: You say William Dyson. Was he the one that passed away just a few years ago? Who married a Cooksey?

C: Now William Dyson married a Martin. T.C. Martin was principal of the Hughesville school and was also superintendent of [Charles County]. Married his sister. Preston Dyson married Cooksey.

J: Alright now is that—that's who's we're thinking of.

C: In the big white house right on the corner.

J: Yes, yeah we know a nephew of his, [Birch Bee].

C: Oh yes.

J: Do you know [Birch Bee]?

C: Oh yes. I've known [Birch Bee] all his life. The whole family.

J: Oh yeah so that was his Uncle Preston. So there were quite a number of Dyson families in that neighborhood. Who were some of the other more numerous families?

C: Well [some around] quite a few Bowling's from Trinity Church all around.

J: What was their church affiliation for the most part? The Bowling's?

C: Methodist.

J: Okay. Were there other young married couples in your neighborhood that you could chum around with?

C: Oh yes Robert and Catherine Bowling.

J: Did you know any Goth's at all over that way?

C: Well they had moved away before we were married. They owned a home right next to Trinity Church where Robert Bowling and Catherine bought when they were married.

J: In the next couple weeks we hope to interview one of the Goth ladies who was born in that house and she's about 93.

C: Which one would it be?

J: Oh she lived near [Leisure World].

C: Is it Lucy?

J: Mhm [Inaudible]. Do you know her?

C: I did. I used to know her. She was a great friend of Josephine Maude's who was a member of Trinity Church all her life. Ms. Josephine, Mr. [Inaudible]. They weren't married but she played the organ and her life was Trinity Church and working for it.

J: Well I will tell her that we have met.

C: That Frank Swann's wife. She would remember Frank because they grew up together, went to Sunday School together.

J: Yeah well isn't that something. Now she's alive and well and we'll be interviewing her in connection with Stone family history because she married a Stone. I mean her sister.

C: Her sister [did that], Bessie.

J: Bessie Mary Michael Robertson Stone.

C: I knew Bessie too. Did you find it?

F: [Inaudible sentence].

C: Oh why didn't you tell me. I have mine [inaudible].

J: What sort of land was this that your father inherited? Was it a pretty decent farmland? Bottom land, high.

C: Now do you mean my father in law? My husband's?

J: Your husbands.

C: It was a very good farm. One of the best. It grew good grain and tobacco.

J: Is this a fairly low level piece?

C: Yes. Very few hills.

J: What was some of the earliest farm equipment that your husband bought himself?

C: You mean a mechanical like tractor?

J: Yes.

C: A Ford tractor.

J: And that was just about the time when you were married that that was beginning to be the thing. For those who could afford it. Do you remember whether or not his father had a tractor?

C: Oh no.

F: [Inaudible phrase] got his first tractor.

J: [Inaudible phrase].

F: [Inaudible sentence.]

J: So after you moved up here and settled into farming what were some of the problems if any that you met as a young farm wife during that first four or five years? Trying to get started what were some of the things that really took a little something out of it?

C: Well the year before we bought the farm there was quite a typhoid epidemic went through there. My husband's brother died with it and his mother. He was in the hospital six weeks and Francis was four years old. I was left on the farm with a hired man to manage the farm to get the crop in and to get the corn husked.

J: Where did these people live who died of Typhoid? Nearby.

C: Well my husband's brother and mother were living in the same house with us and Sam Dyson's wife. They joined the farm and one of the colored people lived on the farm. They were the first ones that had it. And were all using we had a spring in those days and used water out it. And when they were thrashing wheat Frank and Benny drank from that same water and that's where they all got it.

J: Did they ever figure out what polluted that particular spring?

C: Have no idea.

J: Heaven's sakes. Who was your family doctor in those years?

C: Doctor Harry [Chapeler] in Hughesville.

J: So this was a long way from—

C: Right.

J: And he made house calls?

C: Oh yes.

J: Way out here in an old Ford I suppose of some sort?

C: Well my husband's brother stayed at home. He lived five weeks and we had a registered nurse to take care of him stayed right in the home. And his mother contracted. We put her hospital and I took Frank right on to Sibley Hospital in Washington. As soon as the doctor said he had it I wasn't taking any chances.

J: That's this young man here?

C: His father.

J: His father oh.

C: Francis was four years old.

J: And he didn't? Well he didn't drink from the spring.

C: No he and I didn't get it.

J: So this is a disease that you can't transmit it from person to person?

C: Oh yes you can. Oh yes.

J: You can get? So he was lucky and you were too.

C: So was I.

J: So your husband pulled out of it alright and was able to get back home?

C: Fine.

J: So you had been married about five years roughly I imagine at that time. Six. And the Depression was on too.

C: That's when it was right.

J: How did the Depression years change your life if any?

C: Well not ours really because we were fortunate. What little money we had was invested in the Southern Maryland Bank of Hughesville it's called now. That opened up 100 percent so we didn't have any problem really.

F: Lived off land anyway so—

C: And we lived off the land. We raised what we eat and we eat what we raised. We didn't run to the store every week and buy something fancy. We had chickens in the summer and I canned a lot of meat. The whole kinds. Even canned chicken. We'd take the good meaty pieces you know and fry them and take the bone out and then pack them in a jar and put them in the pressure cooker and cook them for hours and it was delicious and stayed the same way. I canned a half of a beef every year. We'd fry the steak you enough to make it taste like it was fried. And pack it in those jars and you had all that nice juice that'd come out of it to make gravy.

J: And these meats kept well?

C: Oh yes after you cooked them for four hours in that hot water bath indeed they did. We had a variety of meat the year round. It was a lot of work but it was worth it.

J: Was your husband growing husband in these early years?

C: Oh yes.

J: About how many acres do you know?

F: About 15, 16 acres.

J: Well that was a lot of work right there.

C: And he had a lot of cattle too. 18 to 20 head of cattle he raised.

J: Beef?

C: Oh yes for ourselves.

F: We sold some beef.

C: Oh yes.

F: [Inaudible] I remember when I was very young but I can remember he would butcher his own beef and just pedal it you know to the neighbors—

C: That's where he got his start in life. He'd go out in the summer and buy a poor cattle and bring them home and fatten them and then in January he would butcher that beef and cut it up and pedal it from house to house because you couldn't go to the store and buy beef.
J: Did he ever go as far as La Plata with his beef?

C: He didn't have to.

F: He would go to Hughesville most of the time. Old Bowling's store was a big thing just like [Farrell's store or] [Inaudible] grocery store in La Plata other than A&P.

J: Well Cochran was—

C: Cochran and then—

J: Jameson's

C: Jameson.

J: Yeah right so you knew them.

C: Right.

J: Now how many miles from your home here over to Hughesville?

C: Oh from DuBois Road?

J: From DuBois Road.

F: About 10 miles I guess.

J: And how many to La Plata?

F: About the same.

J: About the same so you had your choice. When you were growing up now in the 30's if you wanted to buy school clothes for the kids where would you most likely take them?

C: Bowling's store in Hughesville.

J: In Hughesville.

F: There was a grocery store, a hardware store, a fabric store—

C: General Merchandise they were called in those days.

J: Okay recently we've heard other people say the same. The [Moray's] went there to shop.

C: Estevez.

J: The Estevez's yeah you're right. Estevez and Mrs. Hardesty.

C: Esther.

J: Yeah. You know Esther?

C: Oh my we're the best of friends. She and I worked in the church thrift shop together.

J: Isn't that something. Well we interviewed her about a year and a half ago. Yeah she felt like you did not too sure of it but when we got to talking you forget it because you're spending all your time trying to remember. So how many children did you have now?

C: Two.

J: Two and you were the oldest?

F: [Yeah].

J: Okay and it was a boy or girl?

C: A boy. Six years difference in them.

J: Ah okay. So you didn't have quite the hassle of kids that your mother had?

C: No but I had quite a lot of hired help to feed.

J: Well there you that's the other side of the coin. That's right. The same work had to be done.

C: We had a hired hand the year round and I had my father. There were five men there. And no one to wash a dish or set a table.

J: No girls.

F: [Inaudible phrase] harvest time it was hard for [inaudible]. [They'd book for at least two niggers if not three].

J: Well at harvest time who would you have come in to help you?

C: No one.

J: No one?

C: Just what the two boys could help in between.

F: The only time [they had extra] help was when we [used to] [inaudible] with the old threshing machines or the whole neighborhood would get involved. The women would help one another. They'd you know they go from house to house just like we go from farm to farm to help one another.

J: Now when you were growing up Frank was steam threshing still going on?

F: No I don't remember steam—

J: Okay that was—

F: [Inaudible phrase] [would over at Bowling's]. [Inaudible] and at the time he had everyone called him [Durn].

J: Yeah your grandfather's generation relied on steam.

F: Right but still a few around the neighborhood that used to do their own.

J: Okay in that neighborhood where you grew up who were the people that would go around to do most of the threshing? Was there one or two farmers that—

F: One farmer usually had the threshing machine and [inaudible phrase].

J: Okay that's what I was wondering who those people were.

F: And then the [inaudible] neighbors in our neighborhood would get together the neighbors in the Bowling [group] neighborhood and the neighbors in [213] neighborhood would get together.

J: Okay so that was quite an investment. What do you think you'd have to shell out about 1935 for a decent threshing rig?

F: I really wouldn't have any idea.

J: Eight, 10,000 dollars?

F: No not that much.

J: Not that much.

F: [The first] tractor that [daddy bought]—[new first real new real tire tractor daddy bought in 1940 first]. One of the first tractor [inaudible phrase] sold at Hughesville. I think he paid 920 dollars for the tractor [inaudible phrase]. So let's say your threshing machine and tractor both of them for a thousand dollars a [blow].

J: And what are we talking about today for that kind of equipment?

F: Well I got an old 40 horse power tractor down there that today would cost you 15,000 dollars. Small [tractor].

J: And the threshing rig?

F: No the combine—

J: Combine. Combine.

F: Now combine would run from 40 to 80 and 100,000 dollars.

J: That's a big difference [inaudible]—

F: [That stuff] has done the same thing to automobiles and such. They've got fancy modern and all the convenience and also skyrocketed in price.

J: When you were growing up Mrs. Swann what was the attitude of your mother and father toward education? Did they make any push to try and get their children to go on beyond where they were able to go in school?

C: Oh yeah. There were no colleges, local colleges or high schools when I was growing up. You had to go away to a boarding school like St. Mary's Seminary and St. Mary's Academy and not many farmers could afford it.

J: So you had the added expense of room and board away from home.

C: Right.

J: In addition to the—did any of your brothers and sisters get to college level?

C: None. Eighth grade.

J: Was primarily a matter of money?

C: Right.

J: Okay I suppose any of them could have made it if they had that opportunity. Was there one or two in the family that was more bookish than the others?

C: All of them liked to read a lot.

J: Where was the library in the Mechanicsville area? Was there one?

C: There never was.

J: There never was one.

C: The first one was in Leonardtown. I have a new—

J: Frank what about with you and your brother growing up here? What if you wanted to go to a library? Where did you have to go?

C: To the schools. They had pretty good libraries at the high schools.

F: I went to the high schools [inaudible] libraries we were. [Inaudible] didn't have a library when we were in school.

J: Where did you go to school?

F: Hughesville.

J: Hughesville. Was there a high school there at that time?

F: Yeah I graduated in 46. The last class [inaudible] twelfth grade. My class in 46 was [inaudible phrase].

J: I see okay and that was as far as you could go until that.

F: Right.

J: What was the last year for Hughesville high school?

C: 1946.

F: 1946 was and they returned to a junior high school —

J: I see okay. I think [Birch Bee went there].

C: Yes he did.

J: Well [Birch Bee] was probably about five or six years ahead of your son Frank.

F: [Are you talking of Birch who died?]

J: Yeah. He was in and out I suppose.

F: [Seems like] four or five years [inaudible phrase]. I remember him very well.

J: So the DuBois Trinity Church Road neighborhood that was a place where everybody knew each other and you felt like a community?

C: It was.

J: Although it wasn't a town.

C: If someone got sick like when my husband's brother was at home some of the neighbors would come and sit up with him every night taking a turn.

F: [Well that is this thing as far as farm communities is concerned is just changing since late 50's early 60's. We bought the farm there and that already dwelled here or right here really in 1956.] I remember those first five, six years really if a car went down the road you could look up and see [inaudible] so and so. And now there's so damn many cars that go up and down that you don't even look up unless somebody blows the horn.

C: This is built on part of Frank's property.

J: What property was that that you bought? Who had previously owned that?

C: Mrs. Agnes Simpson.

F: I'll tell you who, Robert Simpson's [father] owned it at one time.

J: The insurance agent in La Plata? Okay I took some pictures of it last summer and he was going to try and look for some—

F: My farm was a—

[Tape Interruption]

C: Okay.

J: Well I'm glad you stopped in. Tell Judy that the Wearmouth's are over here interviewing their grandmother. She is the one that put us onto this. It's all her fault.

F: Oh is that right. [Inaudible sentence].

C: Oh my.

Unidentified Speaker [U]: Nice seeing you—

F: Nice seeing you.

J: Take care.

F: See you later.

U: Okeydokey.

J: Okay so your—

C: Great—grandfather came here from England. He had three children. Two boys and a girl. And he had one of the first old water mills down there where Ray Burroughs just passed away last year still owned. It was in the same Burroughs family.

J: Near Mechanicsville?

C: Where my mother was born and raised.

J: What road would that be on today?

C: Well it's right off of the—

F: Excuse me. [Inaudible sentence].

C: Oh thank you. Flora Road.

Roberta Wearmouth [R]: Flora Corner?

C: Flora Corner Road.

R: Corner Road I saw that today.

C: It's back off the road quite a ways. And they have one little—it's an old water mills there. That run you know the water turn the—

J: Turn the wheels.

C: Wheels to grind the corn and the wheat.

R: Is any of that left today?

C: None of that's left all that whole place has been reconstructed down. The swamps that turn the water a different way and....

J: Well what was his name now your great—grandfather?

C: William Burroughs.

J: Burroughs okay.

C: And my grand—

J: Do you remember roughly the year he arrived?

C: No I would not. And then when he passed on my real grandfather bought it. That's where my mother was born and raised.

[Background noise and distant voices].

J: Well after your father died who in the family had the most interest in family history?

C: Now you speaking of the Burroughs family of the Higgs's family?

J: The Higgs's family. Your son was saying I think that your father remembered quite a bit. Or was he talking about your husband?

C: No he was talking about my father because he lived with us for 17 years after my mother passed away. And he was a great history—he loved history and he could always remember things that happened way back.

J: Now were the Higgs's from the Mechanicsville neighborhood? A few generations do you know?

C: Yes they were.

J: And always in about that same?

C: Same area. The Higgs's and Burroughs all grew up together.

J: Were the Burroughs ever treated as Johnny-come-lately's or had they lived there long enough when you were a girl to.

C: Always been some of them in that neighborhood.

J: Okay. What school did your sons go to when they started? What elementary.

C: Hughesville was the only school.

J: And they were bused over there?

C: Bused all the way from DuBois.

J: That was a long drive.

C: Well because they went all the way out DuBois Road across six to Grosstown and picked up children there and then backtracked. They could go to Washington while they were going to school? Early in the morning. No heat on the buses either.

J: What were the names of some of their friends—their little friends from the neighborhood that road the school bus from that area?

C: Moran's and Dyson's.

J: Where did Moran's live now?

C: Well they on DuBois Road they had a farm on each side of DuBois Road. Do you know where George Morris lives?

J: No.

C: Well it's farm joins Sam's farm on the right and then there's a Benton on the left and then there's another Moran farm. One on each side.

J: I see. Between Sam's farm and Preston Dyson's place way up there going in that direction.

C: Well going down DuBois Road. It's both of along DuBois Road.

J: On just after you pass Sam's that farm joins the Moran farm on that side and then there was a 100 and some acres another Moran same family but it was divided on the left. And this is all belongs to that corporation that's trying for that. So there's quite a lot of acreage.

R: Was there ever a little neighborhood store at either end of DuBois Road?

C: Yes there was Mr. Owens a family of the name Mr. Frank Owens had a little grocery store there and a post office.

R: Now would it be on Route 6?

C: On Route 6.

R: In that old house that's there on the corner or?

C: No when you turn right at the end of DuBois road there's two houses in there. One is a stone faced house and that's where the post office and little store was.

J: Is it the one unpainted I thought maybe was an old school?

C: No that's on DuBois Road. That was the old DuBois school.

J: Oh okay.

C: But after you turn right on [Route] 6 there's Jimmy Rawlings lives—

R: On old 6? On old 6 now?

C: On old 6 now right.

R: Jimmy Rawlings.

C: Jimmy Rawlings lives in there and...

R: Oh I can't think of their names.

C: Palmer's.

R: Palmer's. It's where Palmer's lived?

C: That's where the store and little house was where Frank Owens lived.

J: So you knew Paul Rawlings?

C: Oh yes.

J: For heaven's sakes. And Palmer's son built a barn for us about ten years ago.

C: Oh did he?

J: What was his name? The one that walked with the limp that injured himself?

C: Oh what were those boy's names. One was in service in the Navy and he's retired and come back here living on DuBois Road. And the one that's living in the first house that the Palmer's owned.

R: Well I don't think that was the one.

J: No I don't either. Anyway did you say you went back to live in St. Mary's County again?

C: In 1957. When my son was killed in an automobile accident in 1958. We sold the farm and my husband retired and we built a little brick house. I still own that right next to Erin [Inaudible] and five acres of land.

J: Back close to Route 5 again?

C: Right. Right on the corner of 6. What used to be an old regular road went right down to corner. You remember the old regular road? That one right down at the end of the farm. And Elbert Dyson's widow still lived in the big house.

J: So how long were you back there then in St. Mary's County?

C: From 1958 until I moved here in 83. My husband passed away in 1980.

J: So you're back in the old neighborhood so to speak.

C: Right.

J: So 30, 40, 50, how many years did you live on the Swann Farm?

C: From 27 to 58.

J: What were some of the major changes in farming that you experienced during those years as far as comforts are concerned for example? What things came along that made your life a little bit more easy?

C: Well when we got electricity through there where we could have freezers and electrical washing machine. Other than that I carried my water from a well and heated it on the stove and rubbed the clothes on a wash board.

J: Until about what year?

C: In 1951.

J: Oh for heaven's sakes that long. When did you get your first telephone?

C: Oh not till I moved to New Market.

J: Not until after you moved back?

C: No one else in that neighborhood had one and they wouldn't bring one in for one person. No one else wanted it and same way with electricity. We could have gotten it but the man who had the farm next to us wouldn't let us bring the poles in through there. That's true. Jack Dyson was the farm joining us on the back side and he wanted electricity so the two of us could hook up.

J: How expensive was it to hook up? Was there a onetime hook up charge?

C: Just one about—to wire the house and run the lines was about 300 dollars.

J: That's a better buy than we could get today.

C: Oh my yes.

J: Did your husband have a car when you met?

C: Oh yes.

J: Do you remember what it was?

C: Model T Ford.

J: So throughout your entire married life you at least had automobile transportation. Were some of the neighbors in the early years without an automobile do you remember?

C: Oh our neighbor, next neighbor Wilbur Turner didn't have an automobile until oh in the late 30's I guess. He drove a horse and buggy like the Amish.

J: Was it mostly by choice?

C: By choice.

J: And what was his name again?

C: Wilbur Turner.

J: So when you moved here to Charles County in 27 did you immediately join the Trinity Church?

C: Oh yes.

J: Okay who were some of the early Rector's there do you remember?

C: Well Lector Showell. S-H-O-W-E-L-L. Was the first and then John Waters from Pennsylvania. And Walter Reed. And Mr. Roberts from New York. And Bob [Lowell]. And Mr. [Tetno]. And then was George Price. And a Mr. Lily, Horace Lily.

J: What was the average length of service in that church?

C: You mean the ministers that stayed? Well Mr. Showell was 10 years. Waters was six. Mr. Reed was six. Mr. Roberts was six and from there on out sometimes it was just a year. Bob [Lowell] only stayed a year because he felt like the people didn't like him at Old Field and he just.

J: Are you getting a new one now?

C: We're hoping to. Bishop Heinz was down to meet with the search committee Monday.

J: Where were you married now?

C: In a little Episcopal chapel in Mechanicsville. It's been torn down years ago.

J: And who was the Rector there who—

C: Franklin Metcalfe.

J: Franklin Metcalfe.

R: Was it where there's a cemetery left there in Mechanicsville was the church in connection with that?

C: No it wasn't. It was on old Route 5. Do you know where the medical center is in Mechanicsville?

R: No I know where that little cemetery is though right in Mechanicsville on 5, on old 5.

C: On the left going in.

R: Well going south it's on the right. It's behind another—it's behind a building. Remember that little cemetery off to the right?

J: Yes.

C: Oh I know there used to be a school. A little grade school there. I know where you're talking about then there's another one further up on old Route 5.

R: But that wasn't in connection with a church the cemetery?

C: Not that I know of because all of my mother's people are buried at All Faith and that goes back a long ways.

R: That's on 6 isn't it where 6 is—

C: Yes. Goes on through New Market after it crosses 5. All of my mother's people are buried there and the Burroughs family.

J: Are the Burroughs who run the Amish Market part of the family?

C: Part of the family. Ben Burroughs Jr.

J: Okay who's your all-time favorite rector here at Trinity?

C: Oh we've had so many I liked most all of them. I really had no.

J: When we were there at church last July we met some other Swann's I think.

C: Benjamin and Rosie Swann. And Rosie Swann was Paul Rawling's sister.

J: Oh for heaven's sakes.

C: She belongs to the Methodist church in La Plata—

J: That's where we met.

C: She attends out here regular.

J: That's where we met the Rawling's. What were you having to do to keep your house together as a young bride let's say the first 10 years that your mother didn't have to do? Were there any great differences in the chores and the responsibilities that you and your mother had? Was life much different for you?

C: Not really I can't see any.

J: And I wonder if life was much different for you than it had been for your grandmother everything considered?

C: Well I'm sure it was because my grandmother's go back a long ways.

J: Until you got electricity and had to do all this hauling and lugging by yourself without a large family to help. How many children did your mother's mother have for example?

C: Eight.

J: Okay and your father's mother?

C: Eight boys.

J: So they had a nice labor supply which you did not have. And certainly you couldn't have had a lot of cash to go out and hire as many people as you might have liked to have.

C: No you did not.

J: During the Depression years can you remember about how much money a year cash money you and your husband had to work with? Say from 1930 to 1935 or 6. What did it take just to keep yourselves afloat?

C: That's right hard to say because if you made 800, 900 dollars in a tobacco crop when we were first married that was about the limit.

J: And that's gross? That's total?

C: Right.

J: And out of that you had to spend—

C: Pay your taxes and insurances and—

J: Would you say there were years where you had to survive on 300 dollars a year? That little?

C: I can't really think so. Not after we bought our first farm. You see he managed the farm and worked it for his mother the first five years we were married and she lived with us. Or we lived with her.

J: You mean he managed two places?

C: No it was see that belonged to his parents.

J: Oh I see yes. That's right he was born and raised there.

C: And it was hers as long as she lived. When she passed away we bought it.

J: How many acres were there?

C: 137.

J: And about how many of those were actually farmed?

C: I would say all about maybe 15, 20.

J: So that was a good productive piece of farmland.

C: Yes it was.

J: And you had how many head of cattle during the 30's?

C: I'd say around 20.

J: And enough pasture for that many?

C: Yes.

J: So you had a good bit of pasture then too.

C: See they had the fields fenced in and they'd rotate. They would sow hay on them and then they'd cut the hay and then there was still enough there for the cattle to graze. And they raised their own feed, the corn and—

J: Okay where did these cattle get water?

C: Oh they had running water streams in the fields. All of them.

J: Were horses kept there during the 30's too?

C: Oh yes.

J: And for what purpose?

C: To work the farms.

J: Okay so this was before the first tractor came along?

C: That's right.

J: Did you have any mules or oxen?

C: Oh yes he had two mules and a yoke of oxen.

J: What work did those oxen do that they could do best?

C: Well to haul the crops from the fields. See a two wheel cart could go where a four wheel wouldn't.

J: It was one of those that you had fallen of many years earlier?

C: Right.

J: Did your husband ever have to haul tobacco into Hughesville or La Plata by wagon or cart?

C: No he had a truck. When the markets opened up in Hughesville he had a truck. And if he didn't then the warehouse would furnish the trucks.

J: I see. Do you remember about the first year that he was able to take his tobacco to Hughesville?

C: I'd say in the 40's.

J: After World War II?

C: Oh before that. He took his tobacco to Hughesville when that market first opened but I don't remember when that first was.

J: What advantage was this to a tobacco farmer?

C: Well you got your money quicker than when you [prized] it and shipped it to Baltimore.

J: Had he done that earlier? He had to do his own [prizing]?

C: Oh yes.

J: And where did he deliver that tobacco? To the rail?

C: To the railroad at New Market.

J: And then that tobacco went by rail to Baltimore?

C: Baltimore.

J: So that was an improvement. Did you ever get involved in [prizing] yourself? Did you have ever have to help out?

C: Oh yes I will. We stood and picked it and handed it to the ones that was packing in the [inaudible].

J: Okay how much labor was involved? Was that kind of a hard job or just tedious?

C: Well two or three. It's hard labor but only two could run the screw around.

J: I see. What was that like? Was there a big handle set through the screw?

C: Right and a thing up above for pressure and you would just turn it and turn it until it packed the tobacco down in there. I've helped to push it around many times.

J: About what was the weight of some of those hogs heads? A really well prized hogs head?

C: Seven and 800 pound. A few of them would go a 1,000 but they never liked them to go that high?

J: Too hard to handle I suppose?

C: Too hard to handle and if tobacco weighed a lot the buyers wouldn't buy it you know because they'd think it was green or wet.

J: That's true. You know it's interesting the average weight of hog's head remained pretty much the same for over 200 years. We've seen some of the records for the eighteenth century and you know 680 pounds, 700, but none of them ever over 900. Never. Could you describe for us what you had to do to get a fully prized hog's head from the ground up on a wagon? Or did you prize them on a platform of some sort?

C: No they would roll them on—put boards, heavy boards up on the end of the cart like this, you know.

J: Okay at an angle, at an incline.

C: And roll them up.

J: Could two men roll one up?

C: Not really. The neighbors would always come in and help to load that tobacco. They was dangerous if they should roll back you know.

J: Yeah one slip. How many could they load on a wagon at one time normally? The average size wagon.

C: I think three.

J: Okay that was a lot of weight. You're talking about a ton to a ton and a half really. And what size team would be pulling a wagon with that?

C: A pair of mules.

J: Okay and they were preferred over horses for this?

C: Stronger.

J: Easier to control would you say?

C: Could stand more. I'm not sure about controlling.

J: Yeah okay. So the three different types of animals were all good at some particular type of work? The oxen had theirs's and the mules.

C: And the horses.

J: And the horses. Normally what would your horses be used for on the farm?

C: Plowing, cultivating. They even had mowers. You know in those days you didn't have mowers like you have now. They were pulled by horses or mules.

J: A sickle bar more off to the side?

C: Right to mow the hay. And rake it. They didn't bale it they stacked it in those days. Put it up in tall stacks or put it in the lofts, whatever.

J: Do you remember what kinds of implements your husband had during the first 10 years if you look back now? And did he store them undercover?

C: Oh yes always. He never left a plow or single tree in the field.

J: Some farmers did didn't they?

C: Yes.

J: So did he have harrows?

C: Oh yes.

J: Spring harrow or spike harrows or both?

C: Both.

J: Both and...how many—what type of plow? How many points?

C: Only one point on the horse drawn plow.

J: Okay alright. Were oxen ever used for plowing?

C: I can remember a few but very, very few.

J: Maybe to turn sod over.

C: Right.

J: Something like that that would be a little heavier. Okay so you actually got involved in doing all of the food preservation work that was done?

C: We had to.

J: Smoking and salting and canning. What sort of canning equipment were you using? Did you have a wood burning stove?

C: Oh yes. I had my first gas stove in 1940—well after the second World War Paul [Gas] opened this place in Waldorf you know started selling bottled gas. That was my first gas stove. I had a gas refrigerator before we got electricity and believe me that was the greatest thing.

J: Was that a Servel? One of the earliest makes.

C: I'm not sure what Paul [Gas] sold at that time but I had a stove and refrigerator and oh that was such a help.

J: I'll bet. Did they have such a thing as a gas operated freezer? Did you ever hear—

C: No my first freezer was 1951 and that was electric.

J: And that was another step in the right direction.

C: 1951 and we used it up until last year.

J: Did that get you out of canning pretty much?

C: Oh an awful lot. Especially of the meats.

J: Were there ever any significant losses in food that you prepared? What was your percentage of loss if any?

C: Very, very little bit.

J: That's interesting. Did you ever hear of anyone who suffered from food poisoning because of poorly managed canning operations?

C: Not in my life. I can't remember [inaudible].

J: That's interesting. It really is. And today every once in a while you read in the paper somebody suffering from food poisoning with poorly canned foods. Did you give much—well going back to your mother. Do you recall whether or not she gave much thought to nutrition and a balanced diet for her family?

C: Well I can't remember even when I first started out there was a lot of talk. We'd eat balanced, good balanced meals but we never thought of nutrition. It wasn't—we didn't hear—

J: So you got it anyway you just didn't use the word nutrition. But there was this understanding that certain types of foods should be served together and everyday wasn't just a matter of potatoes and beans and meat.

C: That's right and when my children were going to school you couldn't always buy bread for lunches. I made yeast bread because the local bread truck came to the stores once a week. And it wouldn't keep so I made a lot of yeast bread. One of the men that worked for my husband year round always said my kitchen smelled like a bakery because I baked so much with yeast.

J: Did it keep pretty well? The yeast bread.

C: Yes it did.

J: What were some of the meals that were favorites when you were growing up of your brothers and sisters? Was there a particular type of meal that they would especially ask your mother for on occasion?

C: Well I think fried chicken was a big one. You raised your own chickens you know. Fried chicken in the summer and baked chicken in the winter. At least once a week we had that.

J: And favorite vegetables?

C: Well that's hard to say because the only thing we raised so many.

J: [Inaudible phrase]. Here's one how popular was corn on the cob when you were a young lady still at home?

C: Very popular.

J: As popular as today?

C: I believe so.

J: Do you remember was it a hybrid variety? Was it a smaller ear?

C: Well I first remember it was a country [gentleman] and the grain didn't run straight on the cob.

J: All mixed up yeah. Was it a whitish?

C: White. It was just a sweet.

J: How about some of these more unusual vegetables that have become popular in the last 30, or 40 [years]. Like eggplant, did you ever hear of eggplant?

C: Oh yes we had eggplant. My father had thick bushes.

J: How about broccoli?

C: No I can't remember broccoli. I know he raised celery and eggplant.

J: Green peppers?

C: Oh yes.

J: Beans of different varieties?

C: All kinds of beans.

J: Your so called Navy bean? A lima bean?

C: That's right.

J: Green beans what did you call them string beans, snap beans?

C: String beans back in those days.

J: Okay and the early crops, radishes usually would you say?

C: Well we never had a lot of radish because we didn't—I still don't care for them.

J: Huh, lettuce?

C: Peas and lettuce, spring onions.

J: Potatoes did you grow your own potatoes?

C: Oh yes every farmer had potatoes.

J: A white potato normally?

C: White potatoes. White potatoes and sweet potatoes.

J: Okay sweet potato was rather generally grown? It was a popular?

C: Very popular.

J: And how about melons in the average farm family?

C: Oh yes watermelons and cantaloupes.

J: Okay what was your mother's favorite dessert that she made at home?

C: All kinds of pies.

J: Pretty much like today's pies?

C: Very much.

J: Double crust?

C: Some and she made lemon pies a lot. When you could get lemons. You couldn't get them the year around like you can now.

J: What fruits were available as you were growing up?

C: Grapes, cherries, and apples.

J: On the farm?

C: On the farm. We dried the apples and dried the cherries. What we didn't can. I can remember we used to pick cherries and seed them and dry them. My father had scaffold built with cheese cloth over it to keep the bugs off and my mother would pack them in a stone jar and she'd put a layer of cherries and a layer of sugar. And when she got that jar up to the top she'd pour brandy

over the top and that would keep anything from getting in there and tie a cheesecloth over it. In the winter we'd have all kinds of cherry pies and cherry dumplings and everything good.

J: Think of that. That's great. A good preservative. Just a touch of the brandy flavor?

C: Over the top and let it soak through it.

J: And they would keep pretty much for what six months?

C: Oh yes. We'd have them up till Christmas.

J: How did you dry? Under what conditions and where?

C: Well as I said my father had he called it a scaffold in the garden. It was made of plank. And then he had like a box built around it and he bought mosquito netting—I said cheesecloth—mosquito netting and made a cover and put over it. If it rained we had to bring all those containers in the house.

J: I'll bet.

C: That was a job. If it thundered run and get the cherries or run and get the apples off the scaffold.

J: I'm not sure I've ever even eaten dried cherries. Have you?

C: They were delicious—

J: Did you dry grapes?

C: No. Made grape juice and jelly.

J: Were any beverages made at home? Any alcoholic beverages? Root beer, wine?

C: No—made wine oh yes. Grape wine.

J: During the...the Volstead Act years of prohibition how wide spread was the making of home brew or bootlegging?

C: That was very popular over here on the DuBois Road one time.

J: Oh was it?

C: Back in the woods where the lake is now. Quite a bit of it. People from all around. I know the revenue officers used to come into our place a lot of times looking around you know.

J: Any of the better known families get involved in this sort of things just out of sheer economic necessity?

C: I'm sure they did but I'd rather not mention names because there's still some of them around.

J: I guess the—it was not much of a secret I suppose. Nobody really tried to—

C: No and the one man that was a millionaire when he passed away it was mostly made that way.

J: That's amazing. From this general area?

C: Right.

J: So he did get away with it. Did your mother or you ever rely on homemade medicines? Home processed herbs?

C: My mother used to make a cough syrup with wild cherry bark. She cooked it and put molasses in it and it certainly would help a cough.

J: Did it taste alright?

C: Delicious.

J: I'll bet yeah. Did you ever see her do it?

C: Oh yes.

J: Can you go through that because this is interesting?

C: She would take the green bark from a wild cherry tree and then she would cut it up and put it in a container and cover it in water and let it boil until she got all the substance out of it and then she put molasses in it and sealed it up while it was hot and it would keep quite a while just like canning anything else.

J: Wild cherry bark?

C: Yeah wild cherry. I don't know where she got that idea from. It was an old Indian remedy they said.

J: Anything else? How about fevers? Did she have a particular thing that she would use for fever, to reduce fever?

C: Quinine.

J: Quinine. Okay. Could that be bought at a grocery store?

C: Oh yes.

J: You didn't need a doctor's prescription?

C: And you get the Quinine in the capsules. Many capsules I sealed and the capsule would tell you exactly how much each one would contain.

J: Was it a powder?

C: Powder. Yes.

J: Oh yeah.

R: You could buy little capsules, empty capsules?

C: In little empty capsules and we children would fill them.

J: Oh for goodness sakes. What patent medicines were available in let's say Bowie's store over in Hughesville?

C: Bowling's store.

J: Bowling's store.

C: Well—

J: Any salves, ointments?

C: All kinds of ointments and...as I said Quinine, Aspirin. Anything you could buy without a prescription. It was almost like a drug store.

J: Did they sell clothes there too?

C: Oh yes had beautiful [inaudible] clothing. That was really a nice store.

J: Where was it located?

C: Well the REA bought where the store burned for a parking lot. Where the old REA—

J: Oh that corner yes.

C: Right there right on the left as you go up 5. Right on the corner between 5 and 6 on the left. It was a huge store.

J: Two or three story?

C: Yes.

J: Wood?

C: Wood. Had iron bars over the windows. I took a friend of mine in there one time. I was going to do some shopping. She says, "Katie do you really mean this is a store? I thought it was some kind of a jail or something with the iron bars over the window." It was such an old looking building you know but when you got in it they had everything and it was always so neat and clean.

J: Was it as large as those in La Plata? Say Cochran's.

C: Oh larger, larger.

J: Oh for heaven's sake. What stores do you remember visiting in La Plata as a young housewife out here?

C: Well Farrell's store for clothing. And then wasn't too many years they had an A&P store there where you bought coffee for 17, 19 cents a pound.

J: Didn't it smell good in the store?

C: Make you hungry bringing it home.

J: Yeah it's true I can remember that. Peanut butter 19 cents a pound. Sultana. And how did they serve—how did they sell cookies over there at the Bowling's?

C: They were in a large box with a glass on the front. You'd open the door and take them out and weigh them by the pound.

J: And would you do that yourself?

C: Oh no.

J: The grocer did that.

C: The grocer did that. Mr. Jessie Herbert worked there I guess from the time the store opened until it closed.

J: Okay United Biscuit Company.

C: Right.

R: What caused the fire?

C: Have no idea.

J: What year did it burn roughly?

C: I'm not sure.

J: Were you married?

C: Oh yes it happened too many years ago. I'd say maybe—I don't know—

J: We never saw it did we? So we've been here 30 years.

C: Well it hasn't—it was there 30 years ago I'm sure. [Lyon] had a store back of it and his burned and then he built a new store out on Route 6 which isn't—I believe they have an antique store there now.

J: Oh yeah across the road.

C: Right going on through Hughesville.

J: On the other corner.

C: Right going on through.

J: Towards Waldorf. On the right heading north.

C: On the right yeah. So sort of a cinder block.

J: Okay but that was the store you preferred to go to?

C: Right. Bowling's. They just had everything and their prices were good and the people were nice.

J: Did you do much in the way of sewing or repairing clothes for your sons at home?

C: Always.

J: Okay what were you able to make for them when they were little?

C: Well I didn't make too many clothes for them because in those days it was almost as cheap to buy them ready made as it was to try to make them.

J: Was your mother much of a seamstress?

C: Oh she was a very good seamstress.

J: And had a sewing machine a treadle operated?

C: Right.

J: Did she make clothes for all members of the family?

C: Oh yes a many shirt I've made for my brothers.

J: And that's difficult.

C: Yes it is.

J: A shirt's the worst kind. Was your mother ever able to make outer clothing like coats and jackets?

C: Coats oh yes. Pants for the boys.

J: What sort?

R: Did she have patterns in those days?

C: She did.

R: Did she make her own patterns?

C: Made her own patterns. She'd rip up an old piece of clothing that wasn't any good and cut a pattern by it and she could either take it up or let it out. She was real good at that. You almost had to be in those days.

R: She would keep that pattern? She would fold it up and keep it?

C: Right. Put it away. Made out of a newspaper or a piece of brown wrapping paper.

J: Now when you were a girl how much was there to this hand-me-down? Did the younger children end up with clothes that the older children?

C: Right always

J: Or did some of them fuss about this occasionally? What was the feeling about this? It was a common thing.

C: I never was. I was always glad to get my sister's clothes. I always thought they were pretty and they always took very good care of them.

J: Were the boys any fussier than the girls?

C: Not really. We were really a happy family. I think large families mostly are.

J: Wow that's nice to remember it must have been nice to live through. In going to school before you became teenagers normally how were the boys dressed for school in the summer?

C: Most of them went barefoot up until they got maybe in the early teens.

J: Okay short sleeved shirts? Long sleeved shirts? Short pants?

C: Well both. They used to wear knickers when I first remember. Just come under the knee.

J: Was denim clothing popular back then do you remember like now?

C: No not really.

J: And there were none—

C: There was a grey material. I don't know what the name of it was that most of them wore for every day.

J: What color was it?

C: Grey, a dark grey. I don't remember too many—

J: Was there cotton?

C: Oh yes cotton. Very tough.

J: Was yours a regular church going family?

C: Very much.

J: Okay and this meant everybody getting up Sunday morning?

C: And going to church.

J: And getting dressed and going no questions asked?

R: How would you go with 10 children?

C: Walk. We always walked to church.

J: How long a walk was that for you?

C: Well sometimes I'd say maybe a couple miles. In those days you were used to walking. You didn't mind it. The horses worked all week and you couldn't drive them on Sunday. They had to rest too.

J: How about the churches then when you were growing up? Was it generally a full church?

C: Always.

J: Not like now. Did your family have its own pew do you recall?

C: Oh yes.

J: Okay and you knew exactly where you were going to sit. Were these box pews then do you remember?

C: No.

J: Okay just regular in line pews with the front?

C: Right. Chaptico is the only one I remember. They still have the box pews. Have the doors to close when you go in. Have you been in there?

J: Yep last July. Very hot day.

R: For a funeral.

J: For a funeral. Have you been fairly happy here in Charles County? This is home now isn't it really?

C: Right and being around my family. My grandchildren the four of them you know are in and out and if I need something they're here. If they go by and see me raking leaves they stop and...I shouldn't do it but I do it. I need the exercise. I do a little bit each day.

J: That's right as long as you can. Now in growing up on the farm I mean as a young mother over here on the DuBois Road property what kind of yard work did you do?

C: Oh I worked in the field too when my husband—

J: Oh did you?

C: Oh yes quite a bit.

J: Okay. Did you get involved in tobacco planting.

C: Always.

J: Alright you set it in the ground?

C: Right by hand.

J: And this was a horse drawn?

C: No we just, somebody dropped it on the row and you went along with a peg and planted it.

J: All by hand?

C: And I would drop it and then I would pick up my peg and almost meet my husband about half way in the row because he had a lot of trouble with his back and arthritis. And I could stand it most days. Yes indeed and I stripped tobacco.

J: What did you do with this peg now?

C: You'd make a hole in the ground and put the plant in and then press the dirt around it.

J: Piece by piece, plant by plant.

C: Piece by—the whole entire field.

J: About how many would you set into a 100 row feet? What was the spacing of it?

C: Now I couldn't answer that.

J: About a foot apart the holes?

C: Oh no they'd be about 18 inches.

J: Okay a foot and a half. Okay so we're talking what Roberta about 75 per hundred foot row? Could—how much of an acre, or how much acreage could you do on a good day if the weather was decent, planting?

C: Well that's hard to say because you know you had to plant right after it rained and if the land dried then you couldn't plant it. You couldn't plant most days unless it rained.

J: You weren't watering then as you went along?

C: No.

J: So you depended on damp soil?

C: On the rain.

J: To keep those new roots alive.

C: And we would pray for rain the latter part of May so we could get started.

J: Yeah because now they have the tractors and the big water drums—

C: Well we had tobacco planters even when we pulled them with the horses and the mules and they had the water tank so you didn't have to you know wait for the rain. That was back in 1932 we had our first tobacco planter. Pull your shoes off and walk through the mud and drop the plants even after I was married because your shoes wouldn't stay on your feet.

J: Did you mind that very much?

C: No indeed we thought it was fun.

J: Isn't that great. Do you think the kids today would think it was fun?

R: No not really.

J: How many of the young farm wives in that neighborhood had lives just like yours?

C: Most of them.

J: Most of them.

C: Most of them.

J: Okay.

C: The women had to help the men. You couldn't afford to hire a help in those days.

J: And now I hear the farmers say, "Oh you can't hire help now." Well you couldn't then unless you had a lot of money.

C: No you couldn't.

J: Even if the help was available you still had to do it yourself didn't you?

C: We sure did.

J: So what's new? It's just that I guess there are more excuses now. You just got out and did it. So this didn't bother your health any?

C: Not at all.

J: It kept you strong and lively like Esther Hardesty.

C: Right.

J: You and she are about the same generation I would imagine.

C: Esther will be 85 in April and I just had my 80th birthday in December.

J: You're fairly close. Fairly close. Yeah she's known what it was to have a hard life too. So what sort of changes would you make in cooking between seasons? Things that you would feel like making and serving in the winter, in the summer on hot days and you wanted to make life a little easier for yourself? How would you change the meals and the diets?

C: Well in winter you had a fire in the range, old wood range, all day long. So you'd think—on a rainy day I'd get my cookbooks out and see what I could make good.

J: So you did use the books?

C: Oh yes.

J: Okay.

C: My mother gave me my first cookbook in 1925 and Judy has it. She got it with Rumpford coupons.

J: Rumpford?

C:Rumpford baking powder coupons

J: Baking powder oh yes.

C: And Judy has it and she'll say, "Grandma what do you mean by a warm oven or a medium oven?" I said, "See you had no thermostats and I was able—"

[End of Tape]