Transcript of OH-00171

Eleanor Roberta Higdon and Thomas Leonard Higdon

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

Family medicine
Physicians
Rural Conditions
Medicine, Rural

Transcript

John Wearmouth [J]: This is John Wearmouth interviewing Eleanor Roberta Higdon at her brother Thomas Leonard Higdon Sr. at the Doctor Higdon home on Route 257 in southern Charles County. We're about three quarters of a mile south of Wayside, the main road from Newburg to Rock Point. The main purpose of this interview is to get an additional feel for the

history of the practice of medicine in Charles County. This is part of the Charles County Community College Oral History Program and the date is December 12, 1986. I think we'll start out as we should with the lady Eleanor Higdon. Both of these people were born right here in this house and they're both sitting in the kitchen of their birth place which is very unusual to have this very close tie with the past. In our preliminary conversations with them I'll find that they're very much interested in local history and remember a great deal about it. Eleanor Higdon what's the earliest memory you have of life in this house? What little thing about your very early girl hood comes back once in a while? Something especially bad or especially good about your parents? A gift or a spanking or a chastising?

Eleanor Roberta Higdon [E]: I never had a spanking.

J: Alright that's worth remembering. You were that good or your parents were that indulgent?

E: I think they were probably indulgent.

J: Before we get any further there was another child in the family? You two and who?

E: Well there were two other children. The oldest daughter was Mary Undine. She was born in the 1900's and died just before she was a year old. And then my sister Mary Dorothy was born December 29, 1901 about four months after they lost their first child. She lives in San Francisco, California. Well the rest, my brother and I, we have remained here in the county in this area all my life.

J: Well We're lucky but it would be nice to have her with us.

E: That's right.

J: She will be able to get a copy of this.

E: She will be 75 years old this December.

Thomas Leonard Higdon Sr. [T]: How many?

E: 75...85 excuse me, 85.

T: 85, 85, yeah 85.

E: Right 85 excuse me.

J: Has she been back home in recent years?

E: I think [19]81 was the last time but she used to come back every year.

J: Okay back to this early question how far back can you go?

E: Oh gosh.

T: She has the bad memory.

E: Well I can remember of course going to school. I can remember a little bit before that. The first thing I can remember really was the day that my sister was married. I was flower girl and I can remember sitting on a step at the altar's Holy Ghost Church at [inaudible]. And at the point where the priest was performing the service, you know marrying them, they were all together and I couldn't see so I went up and stuck my head between them to see what was going on. That I can recall. That was the first thing that I really remember and I was around four at that time.

J: And your sister was about how old at that time?

E: Well she was about 21, 22.

J: So that was quite a spread in years between the children.

E: That's right. I was her graduation present from when she graduated from high school. I was born that June.

J: Well planned.

E: Right. And mother could not attend the graduation because of that. She graduated from Notre Dame High School in Baltimore so my mother could not make the trip.

J: Where did your sister go to grade school?

E: She went to Wayside—is that Wayside?

T: Yeah.

E: The building used to be approximately where the C&P Telephone [inaudible] Wayside on the road going towards Morgantown.

J: So what little chores did your mother give you to do around the house as you grew up?

E: I'm afraid that I didn't very much work. It seemed as though I really wasn't required. My mother did have someone that helped clean the house and things. I think I played more than anything else. I road around with my father all over the county when he went on calls. That's when I wasn't in school. I spent many an hour on the road. Got to know the area not only hear but up in Wicomico, New Port, Allens Fresh, Pope's Creek, Faulkner, La Plata, wherever.

J: Well did you ride with him when he was still using the buggy?

E: No that was before my time.

J: Yeah that was before okay. Was this an open touring car?

E: No only thing I remember was a Model T. That was the earliest that I can remember.

J: Would this have been a side curtain vehicle do you think?

E: No I didn't ride that.

T: I remember a Model T but George was a Model T but it was a sedan. First one that you probably remember.

E: The one that had the whatever you call it, isinglass sides and all that?

T: Oh do you remember that?

E: No that was before my time.

T: That was before yeah right.

J: So your model had regular glass windows that you could crank up? Not safety glass. Deadly type.

E: Crank up that's right.

J: Okay well Mr. Higdon what do you remember of your early days here. And this property's name is Pleasant View.

T: Right.

J: And it's well named because now with the leaves off this time of the year you can see the Potomac very well from here. This used to be part of the old Milton Hill plantation property of what maybe a 1,000 acres or more at one time?

T: Well to my knowledge it was about 530 or 40 acres and it was divided up into four farms plus the old homestead which was around 20 some acres.

J: Which is the oldest house remaining on the old Milton Hill track.

T: That house over there.

J: Okay the one I can see right now from the kitchen window?

T: Yeah, a lot of those bricks were transported over I understand by boat as ballast from England and they had slave quarters in the bottom. They've got the windows in the basement with the bars in them. As far as I know they're still there. I haven't been in that house for years but it was quite an old home.

J: It looks very, very interesting.

T: Late 1700's or early 1800's I've always heard.

J: Well what was life like for you here at Pleasant View as a very young child? How far back can you go?

T: Well one of the first things that I can remember was the year of the flu epidemic which must have been 1918. We had an old table in that room back there which we called the phone room and I can remember Dad coming in and spreading I don't know what, plate or something, on the table and he would dump this—what was that stuff?

E: Quinine.

T: Quinine on the [top] of this plate and had all these little empty capsules sitting around and I in my younger years was able to take one of those capsules and go around and fill it up. Then when you got your capsule full course he'd stick them together and he put them in his bottle and—

J: These little transparent gelatin base?

T: Yeah just like these—yeah I guess that's what it was.

J: Completely digestible?

T: They were yeah. They were in halves and he filled those things there. The medicine came in a big bottle. I can remember his early medicine. Most of it was ordered through a traveling salesman who visited in the county and he'd come here and [inaudible] stay over night. He and Dad would go through all different medicines that he needed and then it was shipped down by railroad from—

J: From where normally?

T: Out of Baltimore.

J: Do you remember some of the pharmaceutical houses that your father—

T: It was a National Drug Company I think they called it.

E: National Drug Company was the one.

T: And he would get these big containers of medicines and he got brown bottles about this big around and that tall. It was liquid medicine and they would come in a wooden box about so big. Four or six of them in a box.

J: Were they compartmentalized within that box so they didn't touch each other?

T: I think they had divisions in the box if I remember. I'm not 100 percent sure. But the boxes were good, very strong.

J: Wooden boxes?

T: Yeah. The box came in for two things because if somebody came in with a broken arm or broken leg he would take one of those old sideboards off the box, split it, and kind of whittle it, and it put it on the man's arm or leg and tape it to it to hold it in place. Then a little later years I can remember when somebody would come in with a broken arm or something like that. He would call me out to the old office. He would sit the person in the chair. I would have to grab him around the waist like that while Dad snatched on his arm. You could hear the thing snap in place. Then he would tape one of those boards to the arm. Previous to that I used to make a lot of calls like Eleanor said all over the county with him and I made some by horse and buggy. He had his Model T. He had a 1914 Model T but there were a lot of places he had to go especially in bad weather by horse and buggy and I would travel with him.

J: What was the condition of the roads in winter during those periods?

T: They were all nothing but dirt roads.

J: Were there times when even the Model T couldn't get you where you were going?

T: Most of—oh yeah there were a lot of times it couldn't get you. I can remember in a heavy snow storm we had a man working on the place. He had him hook the mules up to the old wagon. I think it was pretty near to Rock Point he had to go and he took Dad on the wagon and drove him down to Rock Point or wherever he was going in all that snow.

J: How far are we from Rock Point at this place?

T: I guess we're about 15.

E: I don't think it's quite that far.

T: Between 12 and 15 miles I guess.

E: 12 anyway.

J: So that was a long—

T: It was a long, long haul. I don't remember going over three or four miles. I went to [Inaudible] with him by buggy several times.

J: How old were you at this point?

T: I guess I was anywhere between four and eight or nine in that area.

J: After you got started going to school full time this then became what a summer time?

T: This was mostly before school.

J: I see so you were really [a youngster].

T: This went on as I told you. I visited Cobb Island by boat with him to make sick calls.

J: How did you get to Cobb Island in those days?

T: By boat. You went to Rock Point.

J: No bridge at all?

T: Oh no I remember when they built the first bridge was built but there was no bridge then. And I used to go to the light houses with him to make sick calls. A boat would pick him up at Rock Point and take him out to the Rock Point lighthouse. Or a boat would pick him up at Morgantown and take him to the lighthouse at Morgantown. He made sick calls for those two lighthouses. I remember going because I remember that boat ride.

J: So he would cross the Wicomico end of Neal's Sound between where the present bridge is and where Neal's Sound flows into the Wicomico?

T: Yeah if you go down to old Rock Point remember there's a Cedar Lane in there. If you follow that thing on down till you get to the end turn right. There was a little fishing area with a pier and everything and that's where he would take a boat as a rule to go to Cobb Island. Now when he went to the lighthouse sometimes he took it at the old pier, the oyster pier.

J: Where was the lighthouse relative to the oyster house down there?

T: It was out in the Potomac River kind of off the edge below Cobb Island and sort of out into the [river]—

J: Was it the end of a spit or something like that?

T: Yeah it was right far out in the river. There's an old marker out there now that'll indicate approximately where it is. Like up here at Morgantown there's still a marker out there. Well

that's where the buoy is off of Morgantown now. It's where the old lighthouse used to be to the best of my recollection.

J: Where was your father born and raised?

T: He was born at Planter's Delight.

J: Planter's Delight.

T: Near Pisgah.

J: That's a very old name.

T: Yeah and that's an old farm there. I think it was in his mother's family. They were Lawson's. He was born and raised there. He went to Charlotte Hall school and after finishing Charlotte Hall he decided he wanted to go into medical school.

J: And your father's full name was?

T: Thomas Lawson Higdon. Mine is Thomas Leonard—

J: Okay Thomas L-A-W-S-O-N?

T: Yeah.

J: Thomas Lawson Higdon.

T: Right.

J: Now he would have been born on in terms of today's roads and names what would be the name of the road where his birthplace was?

E: Poorhouse.

T: It was Poorhouse Road just before you hit—what's that road that cuts across there? Is that Annapolis Woods Road? What is that?

Roberta Wearmouth [R]: There is Annapolis Woods Road.

E: I don't know I think it's near the—before you get to Pisgah.

J: Is that where Ripley Road ends and Annapolis Woods Road begins?

R: And it crosses Poorhouse Road.

J: Yeah they continue straight across.

T: It continues straight across Poorhouse Road—

J: But the roads are different names on either side of Poorhouse Road?

R: Yes they are.

T: Yeah I think so.

J: So he was down near that intersection.

T: Yeah but he as you were going towards Pisgah it would be the farm to the right just before you get the intersection. It was a right good size farm in there.

J: Okay so they were neighbors of the Gray's and—

T: Yeah. Calvin Compton's father lived on down towards Pisgah a little further because Dad and Calvin's father used to ride horse back to school together a lot. And I guess I don't know where they went. Pisgah I guess.

J: Was your father the only physician in the family as far as you know?

T: As far as I know.

J: Okay his first formal education took place where?

T: Well from Charlotte Hall he went to Baltimore University or University of Baltimore whatever they—

E: Well that's a question I've always—we have a diploma you see, University of Baltimore 1897. That he got his medical degree and I wrote there to the University of Baltimore and just within the past week and asked for information and they wrote back and said that they never had a medical school there and there was not—it never had been a part. In fact this college the University of Baltimore was not even in existence at that time but my brother said that Dad had said at some point that it had been taken over by another school. So I have to check the University of Maryland now but I haven't had time to check so—

J: Oh that's the University of Maryland.

T: That's right it might be. I'm not sure.

J: Try them. Try the University of Maryland medical school campus. I'll bet you that's what [your looking for].

E: Mhm so that's—

T: Well see he started at Georgetown. He went to Georgetown the first year.

J: What year was that? Do you have any idea?

T: About 91 or two.

E: I don't really know because 1893 we read—there's a letter. When was it dated? He wrote it in what 1898? The one we were looking at today.

T: Oh yeah.

E: And he spoke about and they would get married, this was March, and they would get married in June. And he said, just think, it was around like 1893 that they didn't know each other. Well see he taught school at Newburg and that' where he evidently met my mother.

J: Did he go from Charlotte Hall to teaching?

E: That's what we don't know.

T: We don't know.

E: He taught some and then go to school some. He would take time off.

T: He would take a year or two off to make some more money so he could back to school.

J: So his family wasn't able to pay the full rate?

T: Well he had his mother die when he was only a year and a half old. His father was in the Confederate Army. I don't think—I don't know. He lived on that old farm but I don't know too much about what went on in those days.

J: Do you know the full name of your father's father?

E: Oh yeah. Francis Leonard Higdon was his father's name.

J: Okay good, good this is something else we want. We want to keep in mind. Now do you have any idea about what year he was granted this degree?

E: Yes he was granted it in 1897 in April, the 15th of April.

J: Okay and then he came back home? Where did he open up his medical practice?

E: Here.

J: Right here?

E: Well he taught in Wayside but he lived with his wife's parents before you know when he finished his practice and he was living there before they got married.

J: And where were his in laws living at the time?

E: They were living at the farm where Piccowaxen and Wayside schools are built at the present time.

T: It was an old house up back on a knoll back of Piccowaxen School. That's where he boarded until they built here.

J: Your mother's maiden name was?

E: Norris.

J: Norris.

E: And her father was John B. Norris.

J: Ella Roberta Norris Higdon.

E: That's right.

J: Your mother's full name. Okay so they were married now what year?

E: June 20, 1898.

J: And they were members of what church?

E: They were members at that time of St. Mary's Church at Newport.

T: Because this parish down here really hadn't opened up. It was sort of getting under way.

J: Now were both your mother and father's family. Catholic?

E: Yes.

J: Both sides okay and probably way back a generation.

E: Dad's mother was not but his father was.

J: Now do you have any idea about when this house was built?

T: It was started I think in [18]98 or 99. I'd say it was finished in 99.

J: So your father and mother actually designed and built?

T: They actually built it.

J: Bought the land for what we see here right now?

T: That's right. Yeah.

J: They named it?

T: Right.

J: Now do you recall about when the separate office was built out here? I'm looking at it now. The story and a half white frame that looks like it's about 18 by 18 would you guess?

T: Somewhere about 18, 20 or something like that.

J: Okay. One floor, two room?

T: Two rooms.

J: Okay. And then he had an office in the house here before that? That was [complete] this is—

E: Yes.

T: Probably originally he used this room that we now call the phone room. That's where the first phone went. That was his original office. That cabinet you see on the wall was where he put his medicines and what not at that time. Then this part of the house was not built. The old kitchen was out here in the garden area sometime and this was added on.

J: Separate?

T: And it was somewhere between 1900 and 1910 that we think the office was built but none of us really thought to check exactly when it was done.

R: Well your sister?

E: We have asked her. She doesn't remember.

J: Well in looking at the years on this information you gave me it looks like your father was about 30 years old when he really got started in practice down here.

E: That's right.

J: In the fifth district. Now in his prime and at the greatest extent of his practice about what territory would he have been able to cover? Let's say going from Newburg to Rock Point and then up about how far north? Would he go just about anywhere he was wanted?

T: Yeah.

E: Any place he was called.

T: I can remember going with him making calls over on the road going to Goose Bay. There was an old house sitting on the side of the hill right below the Ferguson property. I can remember stopping there at that old house.

J: Down to Port Tobacco and well on—

T: Yeah then there was a—now he was traveling that by automobile when I remember that.

J: I should hope.

T: But at the end of that old road there used to be a pier. The steamboat—

J: Was that Brent's—

R: Brent, Brent, Brent.

E: No that wasn't Brentland, Brentland.

T: I forget what they called it [around here now].

R: I don't know that's what—

T: But at the end there was a big old store there and he—

J: That's right. That's where Otis Barnes work.

T: He used to stop in that store and see the people there. Well they were friends and maybe distant relatives I don't know but I know he went there and there was another little house before you get to the Goose Bay Road that I can remember him making sick calls. This little white house sits back there off to the right.

E: He went to—

T: Not too much in the La Plata area.

E: He went to a number of places in La Plata back off of Kent Avenue and on St. Mary's Avenue I can remember.

T: Back in through there.

J: You remember the names of some of the families in La Plata that?

E: He went there was Eugene Mudd.

T: That's right.

E: And he was Albert, you know Albert Mudd lives near the church? It was his father. Alfred is it? Alfred—

J: St. Mary's Avenue?

E: Mhm.

T: Yeah.

E: It's not far—well sort of across from [Earhart's] the Catholic Church between them.

R: [Inaudible sentence].

E: Right. Right it would be across from her. And he went to people by the name of Oliver back there off of Kent Avenue. It wasn't Kent Avenue then I guess.

R: Mill, it was Mill Road.

E: He went to yeah on Mill Road. I can remember him going to some of the [Gambrell's].

T: That's right because [Gambrell] used to come down, come down here.

E: He went to a number of those. Mr. [Gambrell] came here.

J: About what years would you estimate were his busiest years? The most extensive practice?

E: It was always busy the way I remember it. I mean he was going but he always managed to get back for dinner. I don't know how that was.

[Laughter]

E: We ate more or less on time but we were always together every evening for dinner. But then people would start coming in to see him at the office and he'd build a little—there're two rooms in his office and one was built as a waiting room but nobody ever used it. They sat in the car until it was time to go in.

T: I can remember making some night calls with him. One time going down the old West Hatton farm there was one of the farm operators or colored people whatnot lived in an old house down below. We had a call to one of those houses and we were coming back up that old windy dirt road. It was nothing but a real narrow nasty dirt road then. Of course here's this man laying right on the side of the road. So we stopped. Dad gets out looks at him and checks him out. Find out that he's alright. Weather wasn't bad so we rolled him in the ditch so nobody would hit him. [Laughs]. Similar thing happened coming back from church one time at Tompkinsville. There was one laying on the side of the road. I remember we got out and we pulled him up and laid him on the school house steps. The old Tompkinsville school house.

E: And that same man you almost ran over once when we were coming from Aunt Marie's down at Wicomico Beach. He was around a turn that was right across the road drunk. Got out and moved him over to the side. [Laughs].

J: Well that brings up an interesting thought. You recall your father ever treating people for as a result of their having consumed badly made liquor? Homemade?

E: I don't know rather it was badly made but every Saturday and Sunday night I dreaded for those nights to come because he always had—people would come here. They'd been playing. They were never fighting but they were carved up into that region. And they were so they could hardly walk.

J: Neighborhood recreation.

E: Yeah but I don't—

J: So he learned how to handle butchery cases huh?

T: Oh yeah he did right much sewing really.

E: Remember the man from Spring Hill? Fairfax Cooksey some of his father or some of his brothers brought that man down here at night and he had—that was around 11 or 12 o'clock at night and he'd been cut from like here to here on his throat. It was cold and I remember Dad did it in here instead of going out there. I can hear that man plopped down on the floor. But Dad's you know if he hadn't I mean they're drunk I mean you couldn't give them anything or they didn't have anything ack then to give them either. This was primitive. There was no hospital.

J: So the surgery was done right here on the floor without anesthetic [for anesthesia]?

E: Right here.

T: No he had some kind of ether or something that he'd—

E: Give a little bit. Well when they had liquor I don't think they could. [Inaudible] ether [them].

T: Give I don't know just what it was. I can remember that little old container that he would swing around under their nose a little bit [yeah]. But I can remember him being called one time. This was down just below Tompkinsville they found this man laying on the road. It was real cold and he had passed out and he died right there on the road. We got there he was laying in the road. You could see where he had walked off the road and around this tree in the snow. Snow was all tramped down and he peeled the bark off the bottom of the tree where he'd been going around and apparently he came back and collapsed out on the road. I can remember a day or two days afterwards going down you could see a plaque of ice still on the road where that man's head had laid and melted that snow.

J: This was a case of drunkenness?

T: Yeah I think he had too much to drink. And then there was another time I went with him down on the creek back of the store at Tompkinsville and it was also to check on a man that they considered dead. They had him tied up with a string. He was floating out in the water. He was about that big around [inaudible phrase]. Of course when they questioned about [inaudible] dead. But then they hauled him in.

E: Didn't see any of that.

T: Pulled him up on the shore. I remember going down there with him and seeing that man floating around out there [inaudible]. It was something else.

J: What was done in those days well let's say during the first 25 or 30 years of his career about a coroner? Was there a county coroner? And would your father have called one in under certain circumstances?

T: If there was anything down in this area he was called to look after it. I think he had some kind of at one time he was named something. I don't know what it was. They would call him to look after or see these people that had passed out. Now there was another time there was an old fellow from [Shiloh] came over here and he said, "Doctor I need a death certificate." And Dad said, "Well I can't. I haven't seen your wife. When did she die?" "She didn't Doctor but I got somebody staying with her. I thought I better get it." [Laughs] I can't remember who that was but I can remember that old fellow here on the porch of the office trying to get that certificate.

J: To what extent would a country MD been familiar with some of the precepts of forensic medicine? Which is such a big thing now. Would they sometimes just fly by the seat of their pants? For example, your father couldn't have had a very sophisticated lab here.

E: He had none.

T: No.

J: Did he even have a good microscope? He couldn't do any slide work?

E: That's right.

J: So pathology and forensic medicine was just way up the road somewhere for any medical practice probably anywhere south of Washington and south of Annapolis I'm just guessing?

T: Yeah I think so.

E: There was none.

J: See these are the things that we're trying to get a finger on and talking about the history of medicine in the neighborhood around here.

T: He sterilized all of his instruments on top of the old stove.

J: This one we're looking at here?

T: Well this one—

[Inaudible speaking at same time].

T: Yeah. He'd bring those things in there. I can remember seeing them all boiling up his tong.

J: What did he use to sterilize them in, a pan, hot water?

T: A pan and hot water and just boil them in the hot water. To the best of my recollection. Do you remember him, Eleanor, boiling?

E: No.

T: Yeah I remember him doing that a lot.

J: Now what did he do out on calls to sterilize instruments? Did he used alcohol for example?

T: That I can't say for sure.

J: Did he—what did your father feel toward and about midwifery? This was a common thing when you folks were growing up down here I suppose?

T: I guess but I don't really. He didn't go into any tell us anything.

E: He didn't talk about his business.

J: I was just wondering if doctors like your dad would have perhaps a list of acceptable midwives that he could recommend or were there absolutely no controls whatsoever over midwifery?

T: That I can't answer.

J: Which was such a big thing. Now I ask because two weeks ago we did a very interesting interview with Mrs. Thompson. Lillian [Ezeta] Howe Thompson. Do you know her?

E: Where does she live now?

J: She was born and raised on [Dolly Morman] Creek. She lived at Mount Republican. They lived near Mount Victoria.

R: They were tenant farmers for [inaudible].

J: Professional white full time tenant farmers. Ten children she had. She's 90 years old and in remarkable health and never had a doctor with her at the time she gave birth. Always a midwife and sometimes often they couldn't find a midwife so a relative was brought in qualified or not. But that's remarkable with practically zero failure.

T: Yeah.

E: That's right.

J: This woman used to walk from Mount Republican to Issue to go to church, 1915, 20.

T: Yeah I don't doubt it. She would have been in your day she would have been considered much, much older. An old person but here she is. Bless her heart. She's about four feet ten.

E: Where's she living? At the nursing home now?

R: She just moved out. She's with a daughter over at Kent Island.

J: She's too far—too much alive. So she's gone to Kent Island to live with her daughter.

R: A Mrs.—well in fact her daughter is married to John Lawrence's son.

T: Married to who?

R: John Lawrence's son.

T: Oh yeah.

E: Oh okay.

J: Anyway that's an interesting aspect of country medicine, the midwife. And they were big. I have not been able to line any of them to interview.

T: Yeah well I really can't—

J: About what percentage of your father's area would have been black?

E: I don't know because they were more central in certain area but they're spread out also mixed in.

T: They were mixed in because practically every farm had one or two black—

J: Would it have been as close as 50/50?

E: Oh I don't know that.

T: I haven't any idea how close it would've been.

R: Does he have [any written books, account books]?

E: We have some but I know there were a lot of colored people that he went to but I can't say what percent. But I know Shiloh and Issue, Rock Point area have a lot of them.

T: Yeah Shiloh and Issue would have been the two largest areas.

J: So both white and colored would visit right out here and wait at the office?

E: That's right.

T: And then they had two organizations. The Rock Point Beneficial Association I think was the name of one. Was made up with the oystermen and fishermen and whatnot. They contributed so much a month a year or something into this thing. If Dad made a call to one of those families then he was sure getting paid. He got a dollar and a half from the Rock Point Beneficiary Association.

R: Medical Insurance.

T: Yeah. And they also had another one that was located around Issue. It was a colored people's beneficial association. It worked the same way.

J: I hear the Amish do that today. [Inaudible] self-help.

E: I was looking at a couple old books that he had and beside the names it was something like RPBA, Rock Point and then CBA would be the Colored Beneficial Association. But I don't have complete records at all and can't read them.

J: Did you as children and did your mother ever feel that because your father was a doctor you were being subjected to or exposed to germs and illness beyond the average?

E: I never heard anything about it but that's why he built the office outside because my sister was a little girl then and I think someone a child was brought here that had a contagious disease and that's when he decided that his office should be separate from the house. But I never heard anything. We never took medicine. We never heard, never thought about being sick. You might have a cold, the Measles, and things like that but I never felt like it.

J: What was the most serious childhood illness that you experienced in your own family? The two of you and your sister?

E: Chicken Pox was the worst thing I ever had. You had Mumps.

J: No Scarlett Fever for example? Typhoid?

E: No Scarlett—oh no. We just had the regular things.

J: How about the flu? Did you escape that during World War I?

T: I think so. One year I can remember I was right sick and they had me upstairs in the spare room with the old stove going. I was in there for I don't know a week or something I can't remember but I know when I came out I had that first little teeny bicycle. I was so week I could hardly ride the darn bicycle to get up to to the stable [inaudible]. But I don't know. I always thought it was something like flu or something along those lines. But I really don't know.

E: Well you speaking of the flu epidemic around 1918 or so. I don't recall that anybody in the family—you know I never heard of them having that.

J: I'm just wondering if a doctor himself didn't eventually acquire immunities to some of these diseases.

E: Oh I think doctors—I think you would if you worked among it.

J: If you survived you did.

E: Survived it mhm.

J: What were some of the really serious diseases that your father had to treat that were fairly common before let's say World War II? I'm thinking of Polio and Scarlett Fever and Diphtheria and Typhoid and Cholera. Did he get into all of those one way or another?

T: It seems to me there was quite a bit of Typhoid Fever.

E: There was Typhoid. I don't remember too much of Scarlett Fever but we never—Dad never talked much about what people had. We didn't know who had what. Very confidential on his patients. But I don't think there was any really big epidemic. I do know one person that he treated for Polio and that was way, way back. That was Hilda Wise that lived over there. I can't—she is still living, quite elderly.

J: How is that name spelled?

E: W-I-S-E. And he treated her. I think stayed with her a lot. He used bags of hot sand I understand and packed it around one leg.

J: Hot sand?

E: That's what I had heard. She was able to walk with a limp but she got along quite well. I'm not sure but maybe the treatment eventually came around for Polio involving hot something from what I've heard I don't know.

J: Did your father's daily contact with human misery affect him as a human being in anyway? His temperament, his attitude, his personality?

E: I never saw it. [Inaudible phrase].

T: I don't really [inaudible phrase].

J: He was a pretty strong person in this way? Threw it off and built up a—

E: I never remember him being mad at us, never. He maybe may have got mad at other people but not the children.

T: No we were very fortunate.

E: We were. He thought a lot of the family.

T: I remember the first day of going to school—this got nothing with the doctor particularly. We went to old Wayside school. It was just a one roomer. It was about 30 of us in there all seven grades and we had two outhouses back by the fence. One for the boys and one for the girls of course. Of course I went out and when I get out there some of the boys, older boys had been in there before. They had pried up the seat which was about so high and there was [two by fours] running around about that high. They put the seat up there. That was two foot and a half over my head. I never will forget that. I came home that evening told Dad. I said, "The bathroom seat was too high." Well he had the old boy from down here on the farm up there the next day to lower the seat.

J: Did these facilities have—were they roofed over?

T: Yeah.

J: They were more than just a fenced in area?

T: Yeah. They were all roofed over. Two holes roofed over.

J: If anybody's been a private in the army [as I would] [inaudible].

[Laughter].

J: Worse than that, worse than that. How did such a life effect your mother's life? Was she a well-adjusted, happy, healthy, outgoing?

E: Well my mother yeah she was sweet somebody. I think she had quite a bit of illnesses as far as now she would have bad colds and things like that. You know and was not maybe anemic. Shouldn't put all that in there but I mean she would not feel real good but she kept going. Her disposition was good. She had an excellent one. She just took things as they came more or less. [Involved] both of them in the family and also in outside affairs of the church and of the school. But everybody, I mean all the people of patients were like family.

J: In a day when down in this district the average tobacco farmer with let's say 10, 15 acres of tobacco would be very, very fortunate to clear 300 dollars a year. We know this. What would a doctor's income have been relative to the average farm owners. We're not even talking about tenant farmers here. The average farm owner if he did well would have made maybe 500 a year. A tenant maybe 250 to 300. How would that have compared with your father's average income during the best times? Let's say during the 30's.

E: Well that was not exactly the best time. That was sort of the edge of the end of the Depression. That's pretty bad.

J: Well that's true. That's true. And even though his practice probably had built up to being pretty broad the economic aspects—

E: Well he didn't collect a lot of money I know that.

J: Well there you go.

E: I mean a lot of—

J: If you're talking cash. If you're talking cash.

E: A lot of people they paid by potatoes, maybe a pig, and things of that nature. I mean it was all cash.

T: Some oysters.

E: And some oysters and some never you know paid.

T: Right because—

E: Never paid the bill at all. Nobody paid.

T: In his books he [inaudible phrase].

J: That would be interesting.

E: You can't—I don't think he kept very good records with them.

J: Well okay I think we've made the point that in those days an MD wasn't necessarily a prosperous—

E: No it was not. It was different than what it is now. I mean you, well like the rest, you lived off of your land. You had your gardens and all and we never wanted.

J: Which of your parents in your opinion now was the house manager? The household manager.

E: Momma took care of the house there's no doubt about it.

T: Oh yeah mother.

E: Dad was outside. Momma was the house.

J: So that was quite a [bit]. What kind of help was available to her in running the house?

E: Well she had a colored girl that took care—well as far as I know in my younger days and all. But later on she had, we had no one. She had a boy that worked around outside and got the wood, and cleaned, looked after the chickens and pigs. We had you know all of those. And a girl that did the cooking, the washing. Of course she did a lot of it herself too.

T: Yeah but the girl stayed here. She stayed in the house and we would take her home on weekends and she would come back. The same thing with the boy. I think they got about three dollars and a half a week.[Laughter]

E: I don't remember it was much.

J: Plus meals?

E: Oh they got the meals and a place to study.

T: Meals and the Bible yeah.

J: Okay now there was a garden, a vegetable garden?

E: Oh a big garden right out the back.

J: And who tended that? The outside?

E: The man and Dad did a lot in that garden.

T: Yeah Dad did a lot of that. Then we had usually three cows and we got all of our own milk.

E: Made the butter.

T: And we had pigs and we raised hogs every year and we would kill them. And just hung them out in the old meat house.

[Tape Interruption]

J: Okay Eleanor Roberta Higdon, I didn't give you an opportunity to finish this really fascinating story about the multiple finger digital amputation. Now this was a brother in law of yours?

E: A brother in law.

J: Okay you carry it from here. What happened and about when?

E: Well he was about 13 years of age I understand at that time. He was born 1898. He was visiting his grandmother who lived up in the Newburg area. A Freeman family [on property there]. He was—his grandmother told him to cut the head off or to kill a chicken for dinner. He goes out to cut the head off and he cuts off the tips of three of his fingers. This is in a time where it was horse and buggy days. His uncle collected the fingers and—

J: They were completely severed?

E: Well that's what I understand.

J: Okay.

E: This is my sister's say so who married the young man who's fingers had been cut. Said that they brought him down to my father which is a good five, six miles. He attached them and she says by using cobwebs. He lived to be—well I don't know. I guess he was 60 some years of age, but there was just no sign of any sewing or any stitching. He had complete use of those fingers that whole time of his life.

J: That's remarkable. We don't know today just what the miracle was. So your father was able to take care of broken bones here as sort of a general or anything.

T: Oh yeah.

J: Can you remember some of the really serious cases that were brought here as out and out emergencies that he had treat immediately and drop everything else he was doing? Were there auto accidents or example, or boating accidents, or farm implement accidents?

E: [Fish boats] [inaudible phrase]. We didn't have many car accidents this area. I can remember one night. I'm sure it was a Saturday night. I could hear a car coming up the hill. We were in bed. And it couldn't make the grade so they stopped half way up and then they walked the balance of the way. This one fellow could barely you know make it. They got to the office and he sat down on the porch out there and he had been cut from like through the mid area from one side to the other. I don't know the man's name but there was blood there for a long time so that made quite an impression on me. He was sewed up and lived to tell the tale for many a year I understand. But I mean that was one of the worst ones that I recall.

T: Yeah there were a lot of cut [inaudible] people being beat up.

J: We have heard of an automobile accident right in front of Mt. Republican. A well-known local family. It may have been the Mathews, Francis Brooke Mathews of Mathews Howard his [children]. Car turned over there right in front of Mt. Republican. I'm pretty sure that the party we interviewed said that they were taken care of by Dr. Higdon here. This would be about 1918 to 20.

E: Well that would be Dad. There was no other Doctor here at that time. In fact he was the only doctor in this area well even when he died. There was no—we've never had a doctor to live down this way. Until Doctor [Woody] and Doctor Edelen came it seemed like there was no one of that—the doctors that came down to this area.

J: Were there any MD's here before your father? Did he inherit any practice at all?

E: Well yes on the hill next to him lives at Milton Hill the Doctor Langston lived there at the time. He was—I don't whether he was aged or not. I shouldn't say this but I mean he had a little problem with the bottle.

J: The medicine?

T: Yeah.

E: And I think that a lot of patients came to Dad. His patients came to Dad.

J: So for a while your father and the only other doctor in the district were within shouting distance.

E: And I think that man died within the year. He died within the year.

T: Yeah I don't think he—

J: And he was rather long in years?

E: He was in, mhm.

T: Doctor [Inaudible] would have really been the only other doctor and he was in Bel Alton. We're talking about—

E: There used to be one on—there was a Doctor Barbour. I think he was Barbour.

T: There was on this other hill over here before Mom and Dad came there was a doctor on that hill, but he apparently was only there a short time too.

R: On this pill hill huh?

T: Yeah.

J: What was his name?

T: The one that was over there?

J: Yeah. You ever heard it?

E: I don't know why Barbour is in my mind but I'm not sure.

T: It's either Barbour or Smith. I'm not sure which but I know the one over here was a Doctor Langston. But you're talking about these automobile accidents. I can remember Dad getting a call that a man in this accident—he was a Mr. [Reeder] really—up almost opposite of where the Glasva School is now. They'd taken him to La Plata. His car had been hit by some kind of a army truck or something. I don't know what it was. They had him up at the what's now the Carrico building—it was a hotel back then—in one of the rooms. I remember going up there with Dad. There was an army doctor or somebody who apparently with this army brigade that was going through. I think they had probably used the old ferry boat down here at Morgantown from Virginia over. I think that's where they were coming from. But anyhow we get up there and this Mr. [Reeder] laying in there on the bed. The doctor told Dad he said, "Well you better not let your son come in here." Dad said, "Oh he can [stay on the corner boy]."

J: How old were you then?

T: I don't know must have been five, or six, seven year old.

J: World War I period.

T: The head back through here it had cut just the outside part of his scalp like it had flopped down laying down over top over top of his hair. I can remember they swabbed that thing like with iodine, pulled that thing back up, and sewed that thing from here on up to here. That old man lived for 25, 30 years.

J: Like one of the Piscataway's got him. What was his first name? Do you remember which [Reeder]?

T: Who was that?

J: Now the [Reeder] home was where?

T: Well right up here at Newburg.

E: You mean Jack [Reeder]?

T: Yeah. What's the girl's name there?

E: Mary Elizabeth [Tiller].

J: Okay so he was of that family?

E: I don't know.

T: Yeah he was of that family. He was her father's father I guess it was. I think.

E: Would be her grandfather then.

R: Did you ever think of going into the medical profession?

T: No. Well Dad discouraged me from it to start with.

J: [Inaudible].

T: Oh too much hard work. Too much on the move. Never have time for this and never have time for that. I was more interested in construction work and mechanical electrical, what have you. I went to that. But another interesting call I made with him. I think it was on a Sunday. We had right much of a thunder storm. He gets this call, the man says I think my two boys have been killed by lightning. So we get in the car and Dad goes on down pull in the man's yard and here are these two boys laying there under the tree. Dad goes over and kind of gets down on his knees and looks them over and looks at the other one. There's an old tobacco stick laying up beside the tree there. So Dad walks around and takes out the tobacco stick and [give them a whap on the butt]. Up the boy gets and away he runs. They were just kidding their father. When this lightning they flopped.

J: Lightning hit them twice eh?

E: Was that in Tompkinsville that one?

T: That was in Tompkinsville that's where it was. Back on that road back there. I can see those little boys laying there now.

E: Well I remember him telling of a story and I don't who the person is. I know it was a colored girl. She evidently had taken to her bed and did nothing. Dad would keep going back and going

back and there was never any improvement and whatever. So he stood there I understand with her parents at the foot of the bed and said well the next time I come back I'm going to do—and what he said I don't know. I'm going to do this and that and the other thing. He never had to go back to see her anymore. Scared her well. You had to be psychologist sometimes and everything. I do remember that but he never told us who these people were or what the problem. You know you never knew what was going on.

J: It stands to reason as the only really educated man of medicine in this district he would have to know something about even veterinary medicine for heaven's sake?

T: Oh yeah.

E: Oh well he had a story about that too now. Dad—

J: That's interesting. There wasn't any veterinarian down here.

E: It was a gentleman that whether he lived at Cobb Island all the time or stayed there and came down in the summer I don't know but he—I think he was living there. But his interest was clocks and he had them all over the place and he would work on them. He also police and German Shepard dogs and Dad was really afraid of dogs. I mean I never was but he would say, "Now don't you get out on—don't you know." He was very careful around them. I just walk up and put my hand on them. Well anyway this man brought his German Shepard one day had broken his leg and Dad set his leg. They asked what he owed and he said, "Well I don't you know I'm not a veterinarian." So he said nothing. Well he brings him a banjo clock in payment of it. It hung in there for years and years. Then when I wasn't living here it just stayed in Jerry his middle son has it at his house now. But I mean you did have to do little things of that.

T: I can remember one night somebody brought a dog up. They'd been out hunting and they'd accidentally cut the side of this dog. They brought the old dog up here and he sewed that old dog together. I don't remember anything about the pay of it or anything like that but he probably didn't take anything because—

E: Are you cold are you just hard?

[Laughter]

J: To what extent did Doctor Higdon get involved in public health matters? Was he ever called upon to assist the county authorities in enforcing any kinds of public health measures down here with respect to water, living conditions, conditions in the schools? That sort of thing. There again he was all they had down here.

E: [Not that I know of]. But the people down here we still had the same name. They're very close knit somewhat and they took care of themselves to a certain extent. I guess they didn't have any outbreaks of Typhoid or anything. You were sort of—everybody had their own well. They didn't get sick. Had no need for it. School was a different thing. I mean he would fight for whatever it

was that was needed once they started the Glasva High School which was the first public school in the county.

J: How was he involved in that and who was he working with?

E: Can't tell you all of that either but all I know is that Dad fought for education. I know Harry Edwards down this way was very active in it. There was a Mr. J. T. Bowling [that he's dead both of these] over at Wicomico was very active up there. Some of those other Bowling's probably—you know Jessie and Walker Bowling? Was likely his grandfather if not his father. His father was too but his grandfather I'm sure. I was up to the Board of Education the other day reading minutes. Old minutes from before 1933. I was interested especially in the period where Glasva was being built. After it was built it was always a delegation going up asking for something. I figured Dad was in there because he was usually you know if they needed anything. It was an artesian well they were trying to get. Then finally after much going back and forth. They said first the water was not sufficient to take care of the number of children. They were told by the board of education that they should—I guess it would be up to the principal. If he found that that was so then he should notify the parents to send water to school their children to drink. And then they kept on and finally they did get an artesian well. I know his name was mentioned as being one of them that had gone before that.

T: Well he served on the Board of Education for quite a few years.

E: Oh yeah he was 33 to 39 and again 47 to 50.

J: Now did both of you go to Glasva?

E: Mhm. School started in 1924.

T: And you started with the school.

E: I thought I did but I started the year after school.

T: Did you?

E: And the best of my—I was in the first class that started as first grade students and went through to graduate all in one building.

J: 11 years?

E: That's the normal but I only had six because to the best of my knowledge the whole second grade went from first grade to third grade.

J: Who were some of the youngsters in your class?

E: Well let's see. Well this Mr. J. T. Bowling. He had a daughter, Virginia. There was another Bowling up in at Faulkner, Thelma Bowling. You know Garth Bowling? Well she's not the young man, the young man principal at Piccowaxen is her nephew. Mr. Eugene Lloyd had a son

in my class. Eugene Lloyd Jr. Mr. [Morhill] had the store at Rock Point. His son Carl was in my class. There was a Bennett Jenkins from down in Rock Point. A Gwendolyn Montgomery. I can't even stop and think.

T: Was Frank [Inaudible]—

E: Oh no he was behind me. Woodrow Barbour who is Robert Barbour's brother. I had a list I can't remember.

T: Robert Barbour's sister was in my class, Mary.

E: There were 18 I think in my class. That was the largest class up to that point.

J: Who were some of the teachers that either of you had? Did you have pretty much the same teachers?

E: I had Mary Brent Hamilton first grade.

T: Yeah I had Mary Brent. Did Mary Brent teach down at Wayside for a while?

E: I think you had her [there].

T: Because I had her down at Wayside also.

E: I had Eunice Burdette. You've no doubt run across the name of Mr. John [Peadbury]. That's another one's active too in the schools. You know that lived down across from Mt. Republican.

R: He was in the extension?

E: That's right.

T: There was a Watkins.

E: We had a Dorothy—oh yeah Mr. Watkins.

T: Yeah I had Watkins for about a year and Duffy.

E: Mhm Duffy. I had Elma [Elberth], Sydney [Loyola], Adelaide [Garnett], and Mr. Bishop—

R: Mr. Bishop is the principal. [I met him].

T: The Bishop yeah.

E: Mr. Bishop was.

J: What was the building itself like? It was completed about 24 would you say?

E: First class was 24. I think in notes I was reading in March of 24 I don't believe they'd even started the building I mean the way it sounded.

J: There's a two story structure?

E: Two story.

T: Yeah.

J: And about how many rooms?

T: As you went in the front door there was two down the stairs on the lower level.

J: One on each side of a hallway?

T: One on each side of a hallway.

E: Well these two were on the same side as you go in the front door.

T: That's right.

E: Yeah okay.

T: And then two on the other side.

E: Were the two—okay.

T: But actually one of them was kind of an auditorium like place. Was pretty large [inaudible] with this little stall like. And you went upstairs there were two rooms on each side of the hallway upstairs. At the end of the hallway at the top of the steps little area there that was the library. Just a little small room about from this wall to the end of this table from here to this wall. That's all there was.

R: A frame building?

T: No.

E: It was pepper dash or stucco type finish went on on the outside.

T: Yeah it was a stucco on the outside. I don't remember—

R: Where in location to the new school? The current—

T: It was out towards the state road almost in front of it, right out on the road.

E: The two spruce trees that have been chopped off at the top and they've been chopped off at the bottom, well those two trees were like this tall when my class graduated from there in 35. That was what we gave to the school. So when the road going in was sort of a semi-circle, you went in from the road like this. So the school set much closer to the road than what it is.

T: But they had no outdoor—they had no inside plumbing when the school was first built. They had two tremendous outhouses up on the top of a bank going down towards Allens Fresh. So they got plumbing two or three years later I guess before I hit high school. I'm not sure but I remember we were there for a big Halloween party. All of the older boys—you've probably heard this story before.

J: We haven't no but we think we know what's coming.

T: Got together and whooshed down the bank. They went right down to the edge of the road both of these.

J: These were pretty good size structures were they?

T: Oh they were about eight holes. They were big things.

J: Those were big.

T: They were great big things but they sure unload them at night. I'll never forget. I was standing out there watching them go.

J: Just watching them go huh?

T: Watching them go. I don't think I was one of the pushers.

R: The main road went past the school and turned there between the school and the Shell station and went down to the present 234?

T: Yeah right. It wound down around there.

R: And nothing—what went on beyond?

E: Oh that kept going—

R: Oh a gravel road or?

E: Oh you mean what?

R: Route 3?

E: Route 3 kept on to La Plata.

R: And south?

E: South mhm.

J: How did you folks get to school from here?

T: Well I guess—

J: Too far to walk.

T: The first—

E: Well they had school buses but we didn't travel it.

T: Yeah Dad drove me most of the time. Then I started driving myself when I was about 14 or 15 years old. I drove myself to school a couple of years. I drove to Washington. Dad was having a little trouble with a kidney stone one time and before I was old enough I drove this old Model T

up to Providence hospital. Took him up there and I don't really know—I can't remember much about what went on but I think he just went and told this Doctor Kelly where it was and was back out. I brought him back home.

J: What route—do you remember what route you took to get in at that time?

T: In DC?

J: Yeah.

T: More or less—

E: You went Pennsylvania Avenue. Excuse me, go ahead [Route] 5, was that [Route] 5 then?

T: Yeah we took the old road and we turned and went in—

E: Branch Avenue.

T: No it wasn't Branch then. I think we went down and crossed that old [Levins] Creek Bridge or whatever it is down—

J: Good Hope Road?

T: Good Hope Road I think that's the way we had to go in if I remember correctly.

E: Well the old road does wind back you know where—back of [stricks] sort of wind over to crosses Suitland Parkway and goes up Good Hope Road. That's Right it would've been.

T: Yeah I think that's the way we went.

J: You had the three pedal operation on this vehicle?

T: That one it might have been. He had a 29 Ford Model A—

J: And that was a two pedal operation.

T: But that one it started gear shifting the 29 didn't it? I think. But the first cars that I drove were the pedal operated Model T's.

J: You find those a little tricky to start out with?

T: I didn't mind them.

E: Didn't know any different.

T: I must have started driving when I was eight, nine years old but I didn't go out on the road I just drove on the farm.

J: Do you remember the experience of getting your first driver's license?

T: Oh yeah sure.

J: Where did you have to go? What had to be done then to be a license holder?

T: I went to La Plata court house and went in the old court house the back door. I don't remember what I did inside. Whether they questioned me or not I don't know.

J: Was this a basement room or a first floor?

T: I think it was a first floor room that we went into. I had the first examination with some kind of little old like about the size of a pencil. They flash that thing on and I was supposed to tell whether it was red or green. I'm color blind and they flashed that thing on and I couldn't tell what they had flashed, little, teeny old thing. So they gave me a river's permit limited to day time use only. Said I could go to Baltimore and take the exam up there at the Department of Motor Vehicles. So it was quite a little while after that, several months or so. I guess went to [sisters or Freeman] or somebody. They took me down to the commission of motor vehicles office and they had this big deck out back of one of their rooms. Took me out on this deck and they had a regular stop light up on the end of that thing. Course they flashed that thing on and off and said tell us when to stop and when to go. Well when [probably tell me] that thing I can tell them when to stop and when to go. So they tore up the other permit and gave me a full-fledged permit.

R: So you went by where it was located—

T: No, no I can tell what this thing that they had was little, teeny old thing you could hardly see the light in it. I've never seen anything that small before.

E: It was a little itty bity thing.

J: So you've been a licensed vehicle operator for how many years now?

T: About 31 I guess. Well let's see, 14, 16...be 30 I guess. 1930.

J: So you got 55 years. 55 or 56 years.

T: Yeah.

J: A pretty safe driving record would you say?

T: I've been very, very fortunate I'll tell you. I've only had....

E: [Inaudible phrase]

T: One accident that was up near the old Providence Hospital in DC. I was taking back some people. I was going to school then. I was taking back some people from down here that wanted to get back to DC that night. I let them out and there was one—Leonard I guess was in with me still.

E: You lived together. He was a cousin.

T: Yeah I was getting on back to my uncle's home. We just let out—I don't know how far I guess it was. Crossing the street and the man had a stop sign that street and he didn't stop. He hit me on the back end as I crossed the street. Rolled me over. I was in a 35 Ford I guess with 13 dozen of Mama's eggs. [Laughter]. Well by about the time that thing rolled over I was out the window on the opposite side. Crawled over top of Leonard and I was out. All these people gathered around. So the man that hit me he was still there. We talked and we got some of the people in the crowd help to upright the old car and we pushed it back up all four wheels. The wheel where he hit me was egg shaped. When you went along it went whoomph, whoomph, whoomph, whoomph. I think all those 13 dozen eggs but about six or eight were broken up in the back of that car.

J: What a mess.

T: But three days later you couldn't get inside of that thing she stunk so bad. It was a mess. But I've been very fortunate. That's really the only.

J: What was your father's last year of practice?

E: Well I Dad I think he did some practice and he died in 57. But I mean actually I think 50 might have been about the end. He and my mother, well my mother and father went up to with me in Virginia in 48 in the fall and they would come and stay during the cold months with me then come back here in the spring. But even when he was doing that people still came here once he came back in the spring and summer would come you know. I don't think he went out on calls after—well much after the 50's. But even people still a few would come around. But see when he was practicing and up to—well I wouldn't say not too many years there was no hospital sown here. There was no drug store. There was you know Dad dispensed all of his medicine. You got your medicine the price of your office visit I think. So you didn't have that. People, my brother remembers horse and buggy days. I don't but I mean remember even with the automobile people would go to church they would see him after church and they would stand in line to tell him their problems and then he'd open up his satchel and all these colored pills here and then liquid medicine over here and he would dispense it to them.

J: That's very interesting and it makes sense.

T: That's right yeah.

J: Some of those people didn't have an automobile did they?

E: Well [way back then] practically nobody.

J: That's [inaudible] issue and no telephone.

E: No telephone, nothing.

J: So when you saw the doctor that's where you did business with the doctor and he [know] this.

E: But then...in the horse and buggy days, and he remembers that probably more than, because I don't. He would continue. I mean you only go five miles to church. You didn't stop then. He kept on going. He would go to Cobb, Rock Point and down that way and visit people.

J: After church?

E: After church and take Mama and whatever children there were and leave them with this aunt we had. An aunt of his that lived down near Rock Point or somebody else and a friend.

J: An aunt of your father's?

E: Of my father's.

J: What was her name?

E: Well aunt by marriage. She was Kate Higdon. Her husband was Stan. John Stan[inaudible] Higdon. But I mean then they would stay there and I guess have Sunday dinner and of course play with their kids around [they] whatever. Then Dad would come back and eventually we got home. But when Dad went on calls when I rode around with him a lot of them were social calls for me. He'd stop in a family's home where there were children I knew. You'd get out and play with them until.... In fact Eugene Lloyd's see Dad had to go there a lot because his wife was sick a lot. He had a daughter that was near my brother's age and Eugene Jr. near mine. Well Eugene has told me he says he'd almost pray sometimes that his mother would get sick so we could come play with him.

J: And she did. Where did they live at the time?

E: Well that—

[Inaudible]

J: Alright we know where it is.

E: [Inaudible] [sewing here right good]. As I said and [Inaudible] live there now.

J: Hasn't changed much in the last—that's quite a story now. You're absolutely right there wasn't any drug store down there.

E: No there was nothing. It was when the [drummer] came and the order was placed and whether he brought some. I don't know.

T: But he would bring some [at times].

E: But he came from over on the Eastern Shore. You know he lived over at...it wasn't [Den].

T: Near [Easton near Den] but it wasn't [Den].

E: Well anyway it doesn't matter.

J: How did they get here these drummers?

E: This one drove when I remember.

T: He was driving by.

J: This was in the 30's or 40's?

T: Well no this was back in the 20's.

E: [Inaudible] back middle of the 20's.

T: I think he was driving then.

J: At about what time did your father begin writing prescriptions for drug store type dispensing? Do you remember when that began to be available to him as a doctor and to his patients? When was the first drug store available in Charles County?

E: Was that in La Plata or Waldorf? La Plata.

T: Up in La Plata. As far as I know there might have been one in Waldorf before—

E: But I don't know.

T: He always dispensed his own medicine. He may have given a few prescriptions but most of the time—

J: So wouldn't do most people down here any good to get a prescription for the La Plata drug store?

E: No where'd they go? But even in later years—

T: Yeah well you see I don't think that drug store started till well up in the 30's. Might even have been the 40's.

J: Who started it do you know and where was it located that first La Plata drug store?

T: You know where Eddy Sander's building is now?

J: His new building?

T: Yeah the new office. There was a building there.

E: Where's his new office?

R: Well it's a remodeled [Inaudible] gas company.

J: Cross from the jail, the old jail.

T: There was an old building there. That was the first drug store as far as I—

R: We just saw those [inaudible phrase].

E: [Inaudible] Jones used to be there. That's when I in 45. I don't know before then.

T: Yeah I don't know who was there.

J: That could have been the very first one.

E: Probably was.

J: Near where [inaudible] is now on old Washington Avenue?

R: [Inaudible] Sander's office is.

J: Okay—

T: It's where Eddy Sander's office is.

J: Okay.

E: The little white building.

R: It showed up in those—that little slides that Francis [Inaudible] has.

J: That was [layer Truman] a gas?

E: Yeah [inaudible].

J: Then we know exactly where it is. Very good. As far as you know that was the very first drug store in La Plata? And that's where it was.

T: As far as I know it was.

E: And if people had to go to the hospital for any reason they were sent to Providence Hospital.

J: How did they get them there from here?

E: Well I guess you found somebody with an automobile to take you. That's the only way I imagine.

R: Well the train.

E: Well the train but if you're that sick.

R: You probably have to—

E: I don't know.

J: That's true. There was no regular ambulance service available around there was there?

T: Oh no.

E: Oh no. No fire departments or anything. Nothing. I mean you just lived among yourselves. You didn't have any place to go.

R: You just relied on yourself.

E: For entertainment. Whatever it was too far too go. You made your entertainment in your area.

J: Do you recall boat trips on the river and some of the landing's, names of some of the ships, and what were some of the wharfs like? You mentioned Mr. Higdon that remembering coming down from Washington once or twice by steamboat?

T: Oh quite a few times yeah.

J: Okay how would this come about? How would you get to Washington in the first place?

T: Well you either go up by train or else Dad would take us up and drop us off with our uncle.

E: By car.

T: And we'd spend three or four days there and then come home by boat. He'd pick us up either in Morgantown or Rock Point.

E: I only remembered Rock Point.

T: Yeah well I can remember the Morgantown too because the boat oh my golly it probably stopped at 10 or 15 places from DC to Rock Point.

J: Can you remember where it stopped coming down? How about Marshall Hall? Was that a passenger stop?

T: Not to my knowledge it wasn't. The first stop that I can remember is up in old Port Tobacco Creek that road down past Goose Bay [where we were talking about old store]—

J: Sounds like Brent's Wharf.

T: That there was an old pier. Part of it is still there. It used to stop there. Then it went across the river I guess. I don't know whether it went to Colonial Beach...and Morgantown and then Rock Point in that particular area.

J: And from that point did it continue on down the Potomac? Bushwood perhaps?

T: It went along. Yeah and then swung around and went to Baltimore. Yeah it was a Washington Baltimore run.

J: Do you remember the names of some of those? That's going way, way back.

T: I can't remember the names. I should but.

J: How about McAlister, Wakefield?

E: McAlister went out of Baltimore but I don't remember it coming down here.

T: I can't remember what. I should remember some of those names but.

E: I used to ride McAlister going to some amusement place. You went past the fertilizer or something out there that smelled to high heaven. I can't remember where that was either.

T: Well I can remember one night coming down on that boat. My cousin Leonard and I were out on the front. I've never seen so many shooting stars in my life. My God the whole sky was loaded with those things. Course I can remember when they used to transport a lot of tobacco by the boats up here at Morgantown. We used to haul our tobacco and deliver it by boat at Morgantown.

J: What sort of buildings were there at Morgantown when you were a young man? Was there a store there? A warehouse or something?

T: On the right hand side as you go down to the old point, the big house that's there now that was there. You keep on down to where that store is more or less. That was a kind of a store. Then to the right there was a group of bath houses. There must have been 50 or 60 bath houses on the right. Just little individual stalls that you go in and change your clothes and go out swimming. Then there was a house just towards the point a little bit. An old two or three story and this little bungalow old man Bob Crain used as his out house in the summer or what have you. That was there.

E: There was a big pavilion.

T: Yeah they had a big pavilion down there that's right. An open pavilion.

E: It was a nice picnic area, nice swimming there in those days.

T: It was a lot of fun I'll tell you.

J: Do you remember any really serious fires down here in the district when you were youngsters that destroyed any building of any significance at all? Mt. Republican almost disappeared twice I understand because of fires in this century.

E: I don't know. I don't recall fires.

T: I don't really remember too much in the way of fires.

E: There was one man [Tirza, T-I-R-Z-A] that burned but no one—I mean I don't know whether anyone was living there or whether they had anyone living there at that time but it had gone yeah.

J: That's fairly recently 20 years ago or something like that.

E: Probably 20, 25.

J: What a loss.

E: [19]60 or something.

J: What sort of road did you have down here in front between Newburg and Rock Point? What were the road conditions?

E: I remember seeing [Inaudible phrase]. As people were living that one time but you could see it from you know 257.

T: It was an old gravel road at first all the way from DC. I remember when it was gravel all the way from Good Hope Road right on down to Rock Point. The first improved road down here that I can remember is that little section of concrete road when you get—

E: Cedar Lan in Rock Point.

T: Rock Point. It was one car wide.

J: About this wide.

T: That's right.

R: [It's still there today.] It's held up good.

J: Our key witnesses. Good shape.

T: And I can remember one year when it was all gravel road here. If you go down this way and make that hard turn to the right that section in there was always flooded out. They had horses and plows and they plowed that whole section of the road up and then they hauled gravel, mostly horse and wagon from a gravel pit back up towards Mt. Victoria, and they hauled it down and spread it on there and built that thing up to the height it is now.

J: Do you think that because your father was the doctor and practically the only one—well the only one for miles that the county made an extra effort to keep this road up here so that he could get in and out and people could get in and out?

E: Never entered our minds [inaudible phrase].

T: I wouldn't think so. [I don't know].

R: Behind [A. G. Humberford's] store is an ancient road there.

T: Right.

R: Do you ever remember that being used?

T: Oh yeah.

E: Ancient what?

J: Roadway.

R: Was that [inaudible].

T: The road back of his store? Yeah.

E: [Inaudible].

T: I've ridden that road a lot of times.

R: Is that right.

E: The Wright's lived down there. Bob Wright, Robert Wright.

T: I'm not sure that that wasn't the road that we took to get down to the bridge. [And] the day that Roosevelt came down and said we're going to build it here. I was down there with Dad when Roosevelt was down there his car.

J: That was before the bridge was built?

T: Yeah.

E: Was that at the dedication?

J: What year would that be?

T: That was in the early 40's wasn't it?

E: Yeah well I think there must have been another road.

T: It was a real windy road we took to get down there.

E: Was there.

T: I kind of think that's the road we used.

R: [Inaudible sentence].

J: We think it's the old [Adler's Berry] Road. The main road between Port Tobacco and the river.

T: It's still there. [A. G.] might be able to tell you if that was the road. I can't recall just but I thought that was it. As you say Robert Wright used to live down there. Is he still living?

E: As far as I know he is.

T: He might be over around Indian Head. He'd know something about it maybe.

E: He's at Indian Head.

J: Do you by any chance remember some of the standard charges for medical service that your father had a schedule? Let's say during the 1930's? How about for a vaccination.

T: Well she can show you the book.

E: Well tell some of the other up till that point.

J: Yeah well you know how was your Dad paid if not in cash? Got produce, livestock, services? Did people come and maybe plow a field, or mow, or dig a ditch to pay for medical help?

T: I can't remember that part. They would give him some sort of produce occasionally or an animal or something like that. I don't remember them ever planting a field or cutting—

J: Do you remember getting canned goods for example? Home canned?

E: I don't ever remember that.

T: I don't remember any cans but I'm sure that probably some was given. Back in the very beginning what it was about a dollar and a half.

E: Well this is 1909 and there are things like a dollar and a half and two dollars a dollar. It used to be like the first call would be more and then it would drop down 50 cents or a dollar for calls after that.

J: Continuing treatment perhaps for—

R: It just has names it doesn't say what the—

E: They have no idea what they're for. [Inaudible phrase].

T: No because I think it was the same thing for everything except for delivery. Now I think it was 20 dollars. That was about 1914 or 15 because I looked up Eugene's sister [Inaudible] one [take] her birthday and mine were a year and a day apart or something like that. I looked her up in one of the books. I found 20 dollars for the date of her birth so.

E: I think she—Eugene found that after she died.

T: Huh?

E: Eugene found those records after [Bill].

T: I imagine so too.

J: Do you recall ever hearing your mother and father discuss any difficulties they were having collecting money for medical services?

T: Well I know after the bank closing around 29 or 30 things were very tight then.

E: Tight.

J: So the Higdon family really did notice a difference with the onset of the Depression?

T: Oh yeah no question about it because I had just started college and they thought they might have to try to get me a scholarship somewhere or go somewhere else because they didn't know whether they were going to be able to see me through. [Thing broke] I stayed put.

J: When did your parents get the first telephone in the house? Were they among the earliest in this district to have a telephone? Do you remember roughly the year?

T: Yeah right.

E: I did some checking. I don't know exactly because...I called the telephone company the other day and as of 1902 the C&P Telephone company bought out Southern Maryland and La Plata Company I think was the name. That serviced the Wayside area, La Plata, and I'm not sure there was a third area. But Wayside was you know one of the big users exchange or whatever. I also found out it was in this book toll service statement. This is 19—well I don't know when it was. I take it back. Well it was 15 dollars—oh 15 cents. He must have called Brandywine.

J: For 15 cents.

E: And the phone number was 1F22. That's how I found out that.

T: Yeah that was our old phone. I remember it was 1F22.

E: It was a party line to begin within.

T: In other words two long and two shorts. Everything from—

R: Oh [inaudible phrase].

E: Yeah.

T: Yeah.

J: What was the most serious kind of surgery that your father dared undertake here?

E: I don't think he did surgery. No [inaudible].

T: No he didn't do any regular surgery. If somebody got cut or hurt—

J: No tonsillectomy for example?

E: No, no, no.

T: No none of that.

J: Could he handle compound fractures on the average?

E: Well he did it.

T: He handled fractures.

E: I don't know what they were.

T: I don't what you'd call them.

R: Shattered [you named them compound].

E: I don't know.

J: But any serious breaks such as a spinal injury this was?

T: Oh no I don't think he could do that I don't believe. I don't know what he did on that.

E: But I guess you either [inaudible phrase] man at Bumper Hill there he is. He was charged two dollars and he paid two dollars. But see nobody else paid. But I do remember you know that Momma said, that was after he died, that he had said to her, "You find that anybody owes me money I don't want any bills sent.

J: Oh for heaven's sakes. Did you ever have the feeling that your father was not quite satisfied with being a family doctor all those years?

E: Oh no.

J: Was it a rewarding life for him do you think being a doctor for this community?

T: Oh I think so. I really do.

J: So that would rub off on the whole family wouldn't it? The head of the household is not a malcontent. Did he ever give any serious thought to leaving the fifth district? Practice elsewhere.

E: Oh my God no he would never, never.

J: This was it.

T: No this was it right.

J: Well between going from Pisgah to Newburg.

E: Well see he never left Charles County. Pisgah's in Charles. He wasn't only in this district. This is the fifth election but I mean he had patients others but the fourth election district probably as many patients there almost as here. I mean he went as I said to Wicomico and Allens Fresh and Newport area.

J: Newport area.

E: And Pope's Creek and Faulkner, Bel Alton, down—

[End of Tape]