

9-14-1977

(SNP135) Ray Wood interviewed by Amanda Moody

Ray Wood

Follow this and additional works at: <https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/snp>

Recommended Citation

Ray Wood interviewed by Amanda Moody, September 14, 1977, SdArch SNP-135, Shenandoah National Park Oral History Collection, 1964-1999, Special Collections, Carrier Library, James Madison University

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the JMU Special Collections at JMU Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Shenandoah National Park Oral History Collection by an authorized administrator of JMU Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact dc_admin@jmu.edu.

Moody: We're discussing Mr. Wood's recollections of the Pasture Fence Mountain area. Now, you lived with your grandfather up in the mountain area?

Wood: It was my grandfather. His name was Joseph T. Harris.

Moody: And you told me he was a caretaker?

Wood: He was a caretaker, basically, of the mountain, so to speak. He pastured cattle for numerous people: The Wamplers, and various other people from over in the Valley. Reeds, Wamplers, and the Johnsons.

Moody: And you say he lived on Mr. Percy Faulkner's land?

Wood: Yes. Percy Faulkner was the original owner of this land, and as far as how my grandfather came basically in possession of this household, this is a mystery to me at this point. I could not tell you. I could probably check back into some history and find out.

Moody: So he was sort of paid by those people, or was it just that he would look after the cattle and then he was allowed to live up there.

Wood: No, he was paid by these people. He took the cattle in, and he salted them, counted the herds, and so on periodically, and he was paid a nominal fee for this service.

Moody: Was that only like in the fall and the summer and the spring? I guess the cattle would go off in the winter.

Wood: The cattle were driven in in the spring, and taken out in the fall.

Moody: And they came up from the valley.

Wood: They came from the valley, the Shenandoah Valley.

Moody: So would they go all the way through Blackrock Gap.

Wood: They were driven all the way through Blackrock Gap from

Harriston and that general vicinity, which was approximately nine to twelve miles.

Moody: And then when would they go back down?

Wood: In the fall. They would come and get them in October and take them out, and take them back to their respective places over in the Valley.

Moody: How did they tell different cattle apart? Did they have tags on.

Wood: Yes. Every one had his own cattle marked. Each one had his own particular marking. Some of them used a certain cut in the ear. This was before the day of branding. They didn't brand cattle in those days. They would have a certain mark in the ear. Some would have a V shape, and some would have an L shape, and this type of thing.

Moody: They used to do that with pigs, too, I think.

Wood: Yes, right.

Moody: And so he lived there year round?

Wood: He lived there year round.

Moody: Did he build the house that he lived in?

Wood: He did build the house.. This is what I'm a little bit dubious as to exactly how it came about that he was there. Mr. Percy Faulkner, apparently, may have been a grand from maybe England or somewhere when he acquired this land at that time. That's why I'm a little bit elusive as to say exactly how he acquired this place unless possibly it was maybe something or other that Mr. Faulkner desired that he build this house up there and establish his household.

Moody: Would you know if the land was clear when your grandfather moved up there, or was he involved in clearing it?

Wood: The land was not cleared. He cut, my understanding is

he cut the timber from the land and built the house. Part of it is still standing. The existing structure, particularly the log part that was hand-hewn, is still standing; the original part he constructed is still there.

Moody: And were there lumbering companies involved in clearing that? Did he sell off some of the timber.

Wood: No, there were no lumbering companies back at that time because of the distances the lumber would have had to be taken from that area to get it into a mill or something. And there were no saw-mills in that whole area, to my knowledge. There were none.

Moody: Now did your grandfather raise a garden, or how did he get by up there on the mountain?

Wood: Yes, he was self-sustaining. This is quite interesting as to what he did in relation to, he grew his own tobacco for one thing. And he made something what he called a pigtail twist. I don't know whether you ever heard of a pigtail twist. This is a process where he'd take his tobacco from, he'd buy the seed. He'd buy it somewhere over in the Valley, I think in a little place over there called Harriston, was a little settlement in the Valley. He'd bring the seed in and he'd propagate his own bed. He would take the plants and transplant them into a tobacco field or a piece of land that he cleared off. He'd go in and grub it by hand, basically with a mattock and most anything he could dig roots and soil out of the soil, and throw the rocks off, and he'd put his tobacco in. So, and incidentally I have helped to worm his tobacco, too when I was just a tiny tot. Big green worms about yea big, you know, so you go along and you see where a piece of leaf had been eaten off, and you'd start looking for the worm. Well he was somewhere on that plant, so you'd

take the worm off there and of course squashing it on the ground. But he would take this tobacco and he would cut it down in stalk form. And he had what he called a tobacco shed, which was part of an old barn he had there, and hang it up. He had to cure it. So it had to be of the proper consistency as far as the amount of moisture that was in it, because if it were too dry it would crumble. So it had to like on a foggy day or something of this he would take this tobacco and he would take the leaves, and he knew exactly when the right color and so on, he would roll it up. And he would take these leaves and he would roll them in little kind of curls like, like making pigtails in your hair, you know? Well this is what he would do with this tobacco. And he made a twist, and he would take it and tie a little knot in the end of it aside (?) the box. And this is what he'd chew on all the time. He chewed tobacco all the time. I tried it one time. Got deathly sick. I saw stars; the world went around and everything happened. Then, as far as his, he was self-sustaining. Every year he raised not less than ten hogs for butchering. He had two milk cows, which I had to go out in the morning and look up you know and find them and so on. They had bells on you know and you'd listen for the bell. And then we had two horses, and the horses did the plowing. And the milk of course came from the two cows. And then as far as the land, he would propagate his land; he would take certain areas like, what he planted this year in one particular area he would not put the same crop back into that particular patch again. So he would propagate it to the degree that if he had potatoes in this area this year, he would move that into and clean up what he called new ground. He was always cleaning new ground. And what he would plant over in the new ground would be an entirely differ-

ent substance, the potatoes or tomatoes or whatever the case may be, or corn. And we were always, we had plenty of everything. We didn't have a lot of money but we would have, like we would grow crops, and then we had what we would call a root cellar. Did you ever hear of a root cellar?

Moody: Yes. Was it a building, or just a hole in the ground?

Wood: No, it was a hole in the ground. What we did was go out and dig a hole in the ground. We'd take cabbage, turnips, anything of root crops, and put it in the ground. And then it didn't make any difference how cold it was or what the temperature was or this type of thing. We'd go out and dig a little place in the side of this mound that we had put in the ground, and scratch out turnips or cabbage, or whatever the case may be, and cover it back up. So it was quite interesting. The pigs that he killed -- well actually they weren't pigs they were hogs, big rascals -- the neighbors from all the whole area would come in, like the Vias and so on, they'd come over and help to butcher. Well this was sort of a reciprocal agreement between the Harrises and the Vias and well like we had Mose Via, and then some Vias from down in the hollow down there which was Hez(?) Might have been Hez. These names keep coming abck to me as I go along. They would come up and help to do all the butchering. And then of course when they got ready to butcher their hogs, then we would go and help them to butcher their hogs. But all the meat and everything, he cured his own meat and put it aside, hung it up, and the most delicious ham you ever tasted, fried ham. Fried ham is a delicacy now, but then it was just common, everyday, you know fare. There was nothing particular about it.

Moody: You'd have ham much more than beef, didn't you?

Wood: Oh, yes. Generally, what we would do, we'd take a young steer in the fall and kill it after the weather got cold, because we had no refrigeration at that time. We'd take this young steer and butcher it and this was when, well, you might say freezing. So along for maybe 60 days we'd have fresh beef. After a certain period of time, of course, the process of decomposition would set in, and so on, so you had to chunk it, you know.

Moody: Now the hogs, did they just kind of wander around and fend for themselves until you would gather them in??

Wood: Oh, yes. We would turn the hogs, they stayed pretty much you might say roaming on their own. They ate acorns and various things that they would find up until the fall, early fall. Till like October, November. And butchering time was usually around the tenth of December. This is the date we usually set was the tenth of December for butchering. But we would call them in periodically and feed them.

Moody: Corn?

Wood: Corn, right. Because if you didn't do this they would go totally wild you couldn't get them back.

Moody: About how often?

Wood: This you had to do at least twice a week. You had to call them in twice a week. So once you got them in you fed them, and they kind of listened for you know the call. And did you ever hear a hog call?

Moody: I don't think I have.

Wood: No? Never heard one.

Moody: No, I was raised in New York City.

Wood: Oh, you were in New York City. My grandfather got out

there and he would start calling the hogs, and it went something like this: wheeeeeee; you could hear this all over the mountain, wheeeeeee. And this would go on for maybe fifteen or twenty minutes. So pretty soon you'd hear a grunt. And you'd see all the pigs start, you know, coming somewhere from some direction. And they'd come on in, and of course you would

Moody: Did everybody's hogs come there or just his?

Wood: Oh, his hogs, no, they all stayed pretty much together. They were pretty clandestine, so to speak. No, we didn't have any strange hogs. And also we would, to keep them from rooting, we'd put rings in their nose. Have you ever seen that, hogs with rings in their nose? Oh, they would tear a field all to pieces. They would just, I mean mutilate it. So you had to put rings in their nose. And this makes their nose sore when they start rooting. They'd root all the sod up. They rooting for worms and little things in the ground, you know. But you had to do this.

Moody: So what were they eating, then? They were eating just acorns?

Wood: Acorns basically, yes. Acorns and of course there were a few wild chestnuts around at that time, back in those days. So it was just more or less foraging to find food. They would eat certain, well, grass, and you know, a certain amount of vegetation. But their staple diet back at that time was acorns. What you had to do in order to sweeten the meat, you had to call them in, start entice them just a little at a time, get them in, and then you penned them, about at least 30 days prior to butchering. And you fed them nothing but straight corn. This is all you fed them, just corn, until time to butcher them. And this would sweeten the meat up to the point where

it was good and flavorful.

Moody: Now how many would you butcher in one year?

Wood: Ten. Ten hogs. He'd butcher ten hogs every

Moody: And this was just for one family.

Wood: Yes. But this was his, I would say, let's put it this way, it was his immediate family to some degree but there

Moody: How many was that?

Wood: Well there were about six there most of the time. But then by the same token if somebody came in, some immediate member of the family, why he'd give him a ham, and this type of thing. So it was pretty much giveaway, and you know, and use them for their own use.

Moody: Let me ask you about the tobacco. Now, did he sell some tobacco

Wood: No, he did not sell any tobacco. He only grew tobacco for his own personal use.

Moody: Was that very common? I don't think I've ever heard of people having tobacco up there.

Wood: Oh, yes. Practically everyone up in the mountain area who used tobacco, they grew their own. I had two uncles, and they didn't particularly care for the homespun, as you might say; they'd take and crumble it up you know in emergencies, and they would roll it into paper or something and smoke it. But they were avid smokers, so what they would do would be, when they went out to Harriston or somewhere in that vicinity, or in the vicinity of Grottoes, Grottoes and Harriston, which this road went across through Blackrock Gap. Went out to Harriston, they could get to the store and they could buy Bull Durham. This came in a bag and had a tag on it, you know. So you put a bag of Bull Durham in your pocket and left the tag hanging

out, you know, with cigarette papers and so on. So it was sort of like roll your own. And that's what they did.

Moody: So most people, when they went to town, would go to Harriston rather than to go off the east side.

Wood: Oh yes. Rarely did they ever, now I've had occasion to come off the east side. We had on the east side down at Mountfair. There was a Lemuel Shifflett who owned a grist mill. He ground corn and various grains for people. So what you did, you put your grain like corn or whatever the case may be

Moody: What else would there be. Buckwheat, or

Wood: Yes, buckwheat flour also. He would grind buckwheat flour also. Now this happened to be a water grist mill. It was not electrical. There was no such thing as electricity at that time in that area. We would take corn and shell the corn. We had a corn sheller, I believe. Now this was a modern invention at that time. It was quite an intricate thing. You had to turn a crank, and you stuck an ear of corn in, and the cob came out this way and the corn went down this way into a basket. So you ground up, well, it depended on how much cornmeal you wanted. And then we'd put it on the horse. We had two horses. Old Dick and Old Daisy we'd call them. So Old Daisy she was the more gentle of the two, because back in the days when I was a child we used to ride that horse. If a car came along, which was a rarity at that time, Old Dick he would take off, and you couldn't contain him. But Daisy, she had quite a bit of age on her, and she wasn't quite, you might say, as ambitious as he was. So we'd take the corn down to Lemuel Shifflett's mill, and instead of having him grind it while we were there, we would trade him corn for meal that some one else had brought in. So it was kind of like a swap type of

deal, and this way it didn't hold you up. At the same time we'd take butter and eggs, and we would trade them for groceries. And this was at L. K. Sandridge's store at Mountfair. L. K. Sandridge's store, we'd trade butter and eggs, and we'd get sugar and coffee and other things of this type that we needed. Well, periodically we'd run out of coffee, sometimes in the winter, and the winters up on the mountain was very severe, quite severe, and you couldn't get off the mountain. So you had to use stock (?), see. So, in lieu of coffee, my grandfather would go and he would take corn, and he would put it in the oven and almost burn it to where it was practically black. And then he would put it, he had a hand ground, one of these coffee mills, one of these old time, you've seen one of these in the antique shop. And then he would grind up this corn and make him some coffee, brew him some coffee out of it.

Moody: What did it taste like?

Wood: Well, I wasn't much of an avid coffee drinker, to be honest with you, so I would say that in all probability that this was a substitute, to some degree. But they would go to the store like in the fall of the year with anticipation of not leaving their domain for maybe three or four months. And they would buy in, like he would buy, in those days they sold like a barrel of flour. Well a barrel of flour could be maybe what they call a hogshead, which was a keg of flour, and he would buy maybe a hundred pounds of sugar. And he would buy what he anticipated was a sufficient amount of coffee to carry him through the winter. Like I said, sometimes he would run out and have to grind (?) some corn and grind it up, you know. Also there was a little moonshining going on, too.

Moody: Was that corn liquor, or apple brandy or

Wood: No, this was, well some of it was apple and some of it, this was quite an intricate process. I've had I might say the occasion to put some wood you might say under the still when I was just a tyke. I had the nickname of Boots. And I had an uncle whose name was Elmer. And this was a sideline with him. He not only made liquor for his own personal use, but he periodically somebody came by you know and just happened to be fresh out, and they needed maybe a pint or a half a gallon or a gallon or something like this, he just happened to have some, see. So what he would do, he had, he would make it, and this was good liquor, too, so I'm told. It was made in a copper still, and you had to have the right temperature. But most of it was made out of rye. He'd bring the rye and sugar and ferment it in big barrels.

Moody: Did they grow rye there on the mountain?

Wood: yeah, he had a rye field. So he would buy seed and grow this rye strictly to make white lightning with. That was a thing, like I say, it was just kind of like a home project. And we wouldn't have to worry about the revenueurs. They didn't get that high until later years. But they never seemed to have any problems.

Moody: I heard the Vias did a lot of apple brandy making.

Wood: They did. What you do, you take cider after it has fermented, what they call hard cider, and you put it in the still, and the process of distillation is to the degree that you get the temperature up to a certain point, and what comes off like boiled water, when you boil water the steam comes off. Well that is the alcohol that comes off, and this goes through a process out, and then you put it through a cooling process, like you condense it back to

liquid. And that's how they came about with the apple brandy, which was quite

Moody: Did they make a lot of money from doing that?

Wood: No. Basically it was more or less you might say a commodity that they used themselves. It wasn't something that they did for a livelihood. They had everything they needed. All they didn't have was money. Money was not important. So they bartered, traded, and this type of thing.

Moody: Was there anything they sold, like apples or anything?

Wood: Oh no, no indeed, no way. You couldn't buy anything off of any of those people because if they couldn't give it to you, you would insult them if you tried to pay them for it. It was all, you might say, if you're my friend, what I have belongs to you, and this is the way they lived. It was a simple life that they lived, but they lived a very, I would say, religious life to some degree, the majority of them. Of course they had their differences, you know. Some of the clans were, you might say a little on the hellatious side. But basically if you take them and dress them down and analyze them you'd find that the majority of them were just good, simple, down-to-earth people. They were not violent people.

Moody: You mentioned eggs. So they had chickens up there too?

Wood: Oh yes, sure. Yes, my grandmother, she had a hen house, and of course we had a pig pen we brought the pigs in and put them in it. And of course we always had a brood sow for the pig new litter for the next year and this type of thing. And of course we had, well, like the average farmer would propagate a farm, not on the scientific basis that we have today. But then the strange part of it is that it's hard for me to comprehend. I do quite a bit of

farming and gardening and so on myself. We didn't have any fertilizer, other than just what we took from the stables. This was the fertilizer. But chemical fertilizers? Never heard of it. We didn't even know what it would look like at that time. And yet we grew beautiful crops.

Moody: Would you say the soil was extra good up there?

Wood: I would say the soil, yes. It was definitely attributed to the nutrients in the soil. I think it was virgin soil, even more so than you might say some of the bottom lands we have around here today.

Moody: It must have been thin and rocky, but I guess it was just

Wood: It was thin and rocky but it was very, very, had an awful lot of nutrients and nitrogen and phosphorous and various other components in it. But this was why my grandfather, he would go out and particularly for a corn field, he wouldn't plant corn twice in the same field. What he put corn in this year, he would put maybe potatoes, and then he would go and open up a whole new section, where he would go out and grub it up, and so on, and then he would plant corn in that section. But he was never lacking for anything as far as buying. To my knowledge he never bought a piece of grain in his life to feed his stock with. And he kept two horses, and two cows, plus in the fall the pigs and so on. They were killed, you know, at butchering time. But there were always sufficient food for the stock.

Moody: Must have been kind of a nice life, then.

Wood: Oh, it was great. You didn't have to worry about going to work. You didn't have to worry about what time to get up, what time to go to bed. So get up and say Gee, you just got up. And you went to bed, and he was, he retired rather early, usually

when it got dark. Maybe sit out on the porch there for a period of time and listen to the crickets, you know, in the evening, particularly in the fall. But then in the winter time, when the sun went down and it got dark, bedtime.

Moody: Tell me about these winters. Was it like snow the whole winter, just so deep you couldn't get anywhere?

Wood: Yes, basically, you more or less accepted the weather conditions. You knew basically what was coming in relation to what type of weather you were going to have. When it got cold it was cold. Now at that time the winters were pretty much consistent, and you could pretty well figure out how the weather was going to be and plan yourself accordingly. Of course if you didn't have anything to do like we did during the winter time not plans. But with the weather that we have now, it's very difficult to say well, you know, it's going to be spring in April and the ground's going to thaw, and this type of thing. And when winter set in, you more or less reconciled yourself to the fact that, you did, your chores were basically feeding stock. This was pretty much the choice you had. Other than that there was nothing else. So you would sit around, you'd read, talk, and tell jokes, and this type of thing. But I can remember quite vividly one particular year, we had a snowfall, and then there came for some reason a warming trend, and it formed a crust on the ice. Well even the livestock couldn't stand up. They couldn't even walk on it; this is how hard it was. So this is the type of thing that, you know, we had to contend with. But there were no hardships. Actually it was enjoyment.

Moody: Didn't get bored in the winter?

Wood: It's quite boring, believe me. Same thing day in and

day out, you know. You had to go out and create your own thing, particularly the youngsters. But the old people, they were contented to sit around and read, and this type of thing, and converse, but me being a youngster, I'd go out and climb trees and, well, whatever I could think of to get into.

Moody: Were there many around?

Wood: There were very few. They were very sparse. In fact the closest youngster was two miles from me. And this was over at the Barger (?) place when my uncle lived there. This was after, let's see, Mose Via was the last one that was left there. He moved in after my uncle moved out, which was Tracey Harris. He lived in the Barger place, for quite a number of years. In fact he raised his family there. And when his children got, there were a couple of them about the same age as I was.

Moody: So they were your cousins?

Wood: M'hm, cousins, first cousins, yeah. So they moved out and moved to York, Pennsylvania, and that about ended as far as the association with the youngsters. But we used to go up on top of the mountain at night, on top of the mountain, but we were on the mountain then. Upon Pasture Fence, on the very top of it, and we could look over at Charlottesville and see the lights at night. Can you imagine? Have you ever tried that?

Moody: Well you can see them from the Drive.

Wood: Yes, you can see them from the Drive, can't you? We used to sit up there. Walked across all the way across to the other far side. This side, rather. I say far side, I'm talking about from the other side now. Go over to this side, and sit up there at night, sometimes till ten, eleven o'clock looking at the lights of Charlottes-

ville and just wishing we could go to Charlottesville.

Moody: What about school? Where did you go to school?

Wood: This could be very interesting to you; I'm glad you asked the question. We had a teacher. Don't ask me how we got this teacher, but she was boarding, or she was living with my grandfather, and I can't remember her name. She was extremely nice. But we had to leave my grandfather's place, walk across to the place, go down the side of the mountain, and when you get to the creek down there, just about a half a mile below the Minnie Via (?) place, we had a school house on the right -- a one-room school house.

Moody: Below the Minnie Via place on Moormans River.

Wood: M'hm, right beside Moormans River.

Moody: There's a place on the map that says Via School.

Wood: That's the one, Via school, that's it, right down below Minnie Via's place. That's right, that was Via School. There's a huge rock there, is the only thing that's left as far as identifying where the school house was. There's a big rock there. If you were coming down from Minnie Via's place, down you might say the trail, and you were on the west side of the, I'll call it a creek, which was a creek. The creek comes like this, and then you have to cross it.

Moody: There's a branch going off to the side, to the east.

Wood: No, this is on the main stream itself, it's not hardly even a stream at that point up there. It's just a branch; let's put it that way. There is a huge rock on the left-hand side, Well, I could show it to you. sat on it many a time and ate crackers and peanut butter. This was the original, the initial school, the first school I ever went to. But we used to walk all the way from

up on the mountain, and there were some of the Via children, I think they were the Via children, or maybe some of the grandchildren or some of the Vias or something like this, but there was a number of children. I'd say we had about 15 children. it's a little one-room school house.

Moody: Of all ages?

Wood: Of all ages, yes. It didn't make any difference whether they were 15 or they were five, they all went to the same school, and some of them was so big they couldn't even sit in the desk, but they were still going to school nevertheless. And they were teaching the same subjects, so it didn't make too much difference. I'm trying to think of some of those children's name.

Moody: Now let's see. There was a Dan Via and a Bob Via would have been . And I understood that there was a Will Via that lived in that school house for a while.

Wood: He may have lived in that school house prior to my going to it. This is entirely possible. It could have been that, you know, they converted it to a school after he moved out of it, of the dwelling, but it was just a little one-room affair. That's all it was. Right beside the creek.

Moody: Do you remember a Robert Shifflett? I talked with him; he lived above there, for a while.

Wood: No, no Robert Shifflett. He lived above the school?

Moody: Yeah, up there in the Bob Via place, or in the Dan Via place.

Wood: Let's see, Dan Via place. Now, you're bringing back memories. There was a Dan Via and there was also a Bob Via.

Moody: Yeah, I guess Dan lived up near the cemetery, and Bob

lived below that, between the school and the Dan Via place. And Shifflett lived somewhere around Bob Via.

Wood: Now there was an apple orchard we had up there.

Moody: Bob had a big apple orchard, Bob Via.

Wood: That was Bob's apple orchard. But he didn't live up there. Not Bob. He may at some time in the past. But the apple orchard was just below Minnie Via's place. That's where the apple orchard was. If you were coming down from the top of the mountain up there, I say from the top of the mountain, well actually if you were going up, following the flow of the stream, it would have been on the left-hand side. It was quite extensive. And he was famous for raising pippins. I never will forget those pippins.

Moody: And he used to sell those.

Wood: Yes, they did haul those out of there by truck load and sell them, yes.

Moody: Which way did they take them?

Wood: They took them out to across the mountain, out in the Harriston area.

Moody: Mr. Shifflett worked for him. He used to help him load the apples.

Wood: Yeah, right.

Moody: I guess they were mostly dried apples, and I guess fresh apples too.

Wood: Fresh apples, yes, that's what they usually pick, fresh apples. And then in fact everybody in the whole area up there, when the apples came in they would pick apples. I think they paid them something like a dollar a day or something like that to pick apples.

You know. That was a dollar more than they had yesterday.

Moody: Did they use to have get-togethers up at the school house. Somebody mentioned dances or something at the schoolhouse area. That might have been earlier.

Wood: This possibly may have been quite earlier. This could have been very possible if they had dances at the school house, but this relates on back you know to my association with it as a structure of learning. So I really couldn't tell you.

Moody: But you went to school all year round, or

Wood: M-m. Just in the summertime.

Moody: Couldn't get out during the winter.

Wood: No. Everything ceased in the wintertime. Nothing moved, other than livestock and things of this nature. And that didn't move very fast.

Moody: Did you all give that teacher a hard time, or

Wood: No. Everybody loved her. One time I remember in particular, we had it was a flash flood came up, it was a summer storm. And the creek that we had to cross right below the school house where the big rock is that I was telling you about, it's where the creek takes a turn and then goes down to the right side. It makes almost like an S turn in there. We all had to join hands and ford the creek like a chain so we could get safely across. That's very vivid in my memory. That we had to cross that creek, and the creek had gotten muddy, you know, and these flash floods you know they come up all of a sudden, but we all made it safely. We didn't miss anyone.

Moody: What was the age range? At the school.

Wood: Oh, I'd say from five to probably 12, 15.

Moody: How many years did you go to school there?

Wood: Now that's a good question. I'd say I attended that school at least two years.

Moody: How long were you up in the mountain?

Wood: Off and on just about all my life. I'm giving you a short . I was very small when I went up there. I was probably about probably five, six, or seven years old when I first started staying with my grandfather, and this is why I'm relating back to the time when I went to this Via school up there. Then I went back to Charlottesville, but I'd go back in the summer. And sometimes I'd play hookey from school. They weren't as tight on school laws then as they are now. So far as, you know, planting, not being in school and so on. Now if you don't go to school they come looking you up to see what happened to you. But at that time the laws were very laxed, and so I could skip a whole year. Didn't have to go to school. So I'd spend it up there with my grandfather.

Moody: I'm glad to find out about that school.

Wood: Well that's a little school beside the creek, and that's the only school that was there, to my knowledge, unless it was something previous to my association with the area. But it was a very quaint little school, beside a big rock, that I used to eat peanut butter and crackers on.

Moody: What about education? You mentioned the older people sitting around reading. Were most people educated then up there?

Wood: Yes, they had fair knowledge, yes. They could read, write, and this type of thing, and they were pretty good at figures. I'd say everybody pretty much carried their own. I wouldn't say that they were schooled. Just like my mother, she, being raised in the mountains up there, she didn't get any formal education or anything.

I think she went a few years. But back at that time an education wasn't a necessity as it is today due to the fact that they felt like if you were physically able to work in the fields and so on, this was all that was necessary, because, you know, for your life's existence. So consequently they didn't pursue education as we do today.

Moody: In the Via cemetery you know they have the different spellings. I thought maybe that different people couldn't write their names in that family, and kind of had somebody else write them, because the spelling in all the county records is Via, but up on those stones is Via and Viar and Viare.

Wood: Yeah, right. This is entirely possible. I would say so many people back at that time they, like the English did back in the 17th century, they wrote like the word sounded. So this Via, they'd write Viar. It was another interpretation actually as to how the last name was to be spelled, and I think this is why you came across these very spellings of their last name. But it was and it is recorded as Via. But Viar, they added the "r" because it sounded like Viar. They pronounced it Viar, was the way they pronounced it. And that's the way they put it down on tombstones.

Moody: It seems like the people in this southern area, I got this notion of starting with those tombstones itself, they seem to be just much better off than the people up north, up around Big Meadows and Skyland. And those people, for instance, in the graveyard, they would just stick a stone in the ground; didn't have this fancy

Wood: Just a stone, right.

Moody: things (?) on graves like the Vias had. And from your

description of your grandfather's life it sounds like people were just better off down south.

Wood: Well I would say, like I said before, they were self-sufficient. And they had acquired some monies. My grandfather went out and bought him a 1927 Buick, new. I think he paid about \$3,800 for it at that time. And drove this thing, he didn't drive it, my uncle drove it; he couldn't drive. My uncle drove this old Buick for years and years and years. I honestly, he must have had this for 20 some odd years. Whatever happened to it I don't know to this day, but that was a faithful old automobile. Any time they wanted to go they'd get dressed -- they only had one Sunday suit; you wore this to church, you wore it to town, or where ever you were going, and there's no such thing as a change of clothes wearing it to summer and . When it got cold you just wrapped up in something and that was it. Put an old overcoat or something on. But today we change with the season. But at that time all we had was just a change of clothes. And what the youngsters are wearing today, our Sunday suit was a pair of overalls you know. That was Sunday dress. Oh yes. This is common everyday dress now. So we went out and wore a pair of old overalls at that time. Well, a clean shirt, and that was it. And then we got dressed up on Sunday. And that was the mode of dress on Sunday. But we used to be, when they were putting Skyline Drive across, this was 1938, after they opened up the Drive they had certain portions of it you could drive, you know, certain distance south you know, and then have to turn around and come back and so on. But we'd go over on Sunday and sit over and watch the cars go by. This was a pastime; it was all we had to do on a Sunday. There was nothing to do, so we

would go over and sit and watch the cars go by. Every once in a while there was a car. You may see half a dozen in the course of a day, but at least it was an automobile. And this was our thing for Sundays, to pass a Sunday away.

Moody: Did you go to that wayside church?

Wood: Oh you're talking about the, yeah. Oh yes, we'd go to church, down by the riverside. The creek side, I should say. And we stood in church, you know, and the preacher he was, he would come from somewhere over in the Valley, once a month, was when we had preaching. And they'd come, they'd ^{drive} ~~drive~~ the buggies; some of them would ~~drive~~ buggies down; they didn't have any cars. You know, didn't nobody drove cars then, to drive to church. You know we'd drive a buggy or ride a horse or something like that. So I walked. Most of them walked. They'd walk for miles. All the Vias from up in the hollow, they'd come down, and of course the Harrises up on my side of the mountain, you know we'd all come down, and the Sipes (?) right down below us there. And we'd fill the church up. That was quite an experience.

Moody: Now that's called the Wayside Church of the Bretheren.

Wood: It may be called the Wayside Church of the Bretheren which is entirely possible. At the time that I was going we had a Dunkard pastor from somewhere over in the Valley.

Moody: Was that from the Pleasant Valley Church, or over there around Grottoes, or something?

Wood: Somewhere in that vicinity. He would come over once a month and hold services. And also for those who wanted to get married, he'd perform the marriage ceremonies, and also those who had baptis-
mals; like I said, up on the Marshall property we had a big

hole of water up there. This is on up above the church, about a quarter of a mile. And this is where I was baptized, was in that big hole of water. Took a handkerchief and put over my face and I thought he would drown me.

Moody: How old were you then.

Wood: Probably seven or eight years old. That was quite an experience, believe me. Yep, he turned me backwards, and my head under there and he brought me up and I was gasping for breath, and he'd me right back again. So three times he dunked me underneath of there, and I can tell you one thing: if my sins weren't washed away at that time they'll never be washed away. I was under (?) the free-flowing water coming through there.

Moody: The preacher came up once a month. Was that the only time there were services?

Wood: M-m. Just once a month. It was very difficult to get a preacher to come in there because of course . I can understand why, you know, due to the fact the pay was, well, somebody had a quarter, or nickel, or a dime, or something like that. Probably a quarter is the most that he was ever given. The biggest amount that was given him was a quarter, at that time. So the rewards were practically nonexistent, so it had to be an act of God for him to come in there to hold services for those people.

Moody: So it would be different ones different weeks?

Wood: You mean

Moody: Preachers.

Wood: Oh no. We had the same preacher during the whole course of the time that I was there, we had the same preacher. There were a few times, a few Sundays, when he wouldn't show. But then something

had come up you know and he couldn't get there or something of this degree. His mode of transportation, this was another thing. I can't remember exactly how he got there.

Moody: Did he come in the winter?

Wood: No. Only in summer. No, no winter services. Of course the roads were practically impassable in the wintertime.

Moody: What about the house itself? How big was the house?

Wood: You're talking about the house of my grandfather? Two bedrooms upstairs; living room and a bedroom downstairs. It was in a T shape. The front, the picture you showed tonight, shows the frontal portion of it. On the back side, which was the original, this was added on, this front part was added on in years to come. On the back side was the log part. Now there were two sections of it, which was a kitchen and a dining room, which was converted, oh, possibly it may have been, one of them could have been used for a living room in the initial beginning, possibly. And I don't know about the bedroom arrangement at that time, but, let's see now, he died May the 7th, 1938, was when he died. But the front portion of it was not of log. The back portion of it is. All log. All of the material that went into it with the exception of the front portion were, the shingles were hand-split and so on. And it's amazing how long those shingles stayed on that house before they started deteriorating. They were of a certain type of a tree, and I think if my grandfather told me correctly, what they would do, they would cut a tree down, and it was a red oak is what it was, red oak. This splits very easily, and the grain is almost straight. So they'd cut a tree down and cut it into a log the desired length, and they'd stand it up on end and they'd split off these slabs, and then take the slabs you know and section

them off to make the shingles for the house. So, all told, by recollection of when I was introduced to the structure as it stands today, or partially stands, there was a dining room, a kitchen, two bedrooms upstairs, a bedroom downstairs, plus my grandmother slept in the living room. She had a bed in the living room she slept in. Where the stove was, where the heater was. That was all the heat we had. We had a fireplace too, but rarely ever burned the fireplace. We had stove. They burned the fireplace a number of years, which was very similar to the fireplace you showed tonight. So I thought that was the fireplace. Cause I've had occasion to go up there in the last, maybe 15 years ago, and I built a fire in there in the fall, when it was real cold, when I was hunting. This was before the Whitehall (?) Hunt Club took over and got exclusive hunting rights to it. So it was pretty much open territory at that time.

Moody: The lady I talked to said that in the wintertime, sometimes if somebody wasn't home or something, people were just always borrowing stuff, and sometimes they would just steal from people that didn't stay up in the mountains in the winter. I was wondering if your grandfather had any trouble with that.

Wood: Never had any problems of stealing. We knew pretty much, everyone knew everyone else, and there was you might say sort of like respectors of other people's property. To my knowledge I don't ever recall any stealing with exception of one occasion. I mentioned a name a short while ago that lived down on the side of the mountain, and which my grandfather lost a hog. We traced it to this residence where this man lived, because he had killed it up on the mountain and drug it all the way down the mountain. I'm not saying that this man himself personally did it. It could have been some relatives, someone

of this type. But this is the only case that I can ever recall in the whole time that I was up there with him that there was ever vandalism or stealing.

Moody: Tell me about the Blackrock Hotel. Must have gone by there all the time going to Harriston. Was it still in operation then?

Wood: The Blackrock Hotel, no. At that time, where the black rocks themselves as I mentioned to you on the phone when you called me, we would hike up to the black rocks maybe once or twice a year. All over those rocks up there, before the Park took over, and of course they built a trail up to it, and built a trail going around through it, and so on. The elevation at Blackrock Springs is 3,092 feet, precisely, I can tell you. I know. There are initials, dates, all over these various rocks up there. The lichen, this moss that forms on the rocks, possibly may have obliterated some of it to some degree, but the dates and the names and everything are still there. Now directly down and to the west of Blackrocks was where the hotel was, which was quite a resort area. This was before my time. I understand there were people who came from all over the state of Virginia to go to the Blackrock Hotel. The last time I was there it was in a state of collapse.

Moody: Do you remember any buildings?

Wood: Yes. There was a building there. It was a long building, quite long, portico type of thing. It was practically falling down. And the parking area and everything was pretty much open. But now it has grown. Yeah, m-hm. Now, that's it. It was in a state of collapse when I saw it. It had just about completely gone.

Moody: ^{So} they weren't using it at all. That was in the 1930's.

Wood: No.

Moody: You have no idea when it went out of operation?

Wood: I haven't the slightest idea when it went out of operation. But the porch, you know, the long arrangements and so on, the portico, was all down. had caved in, it was grown up in vines and bushes and this type.

Moody: Do you remember any other buildings around it?

Wood: No, I don't recall any other buildings. This is rather heavily infested with rattlesnakes in that area, so you don't do too much fooling around in this general area, For some strange reason, I don't know why, there was a lot of rattlesnakes in that particular area.

Moody: How long ago my room mate, every time she would take a hike up to Blackrock they would see a couple of rattlesnakes. But I just never ran into one. I've been from there and up the rocks and everything. How did you get up to the rocks?

Wood: From the drive, where it makes the turn, where the cross-over from the road that comes up, coming out from, going across the top of the mountain. And you cross over, just up to the road, oh, maybe 500 yards, up the ridge, straight up the ridge, is the way I hiked up there.

Moody: OK, well that's probably the way we go up now. Up where there's a fire road.

Wood: Right, up the fire road, right.

Moody: I wonder how long that's been in existence. I'm trying to figure out how the people from the hotel used to go up to the rocks. They must have gone

Wood: Apparently they had to come up somewhere up the side of

the mountain. There had to be a

Moody: Cause I've got up there and I had to climb on my hands and knees for about an hour.

Wood: There apparently was a trail at one time that left the springs and went up to the rocks. Cause that was the focal point of the whole thing, was hiking up those black rocks.

Moody: Yeah, well I know they could drive their buggies for a certain distance. So I followed one trail, and ended up, as I say, climbing on my hands and knees. But there are several others that I haven't tried yet that probably go a little further. Up near the Via place there, you know the road that comes from the Via place back toward the road up to Blackrocks, this would be up north of Blackrock Gap, that fire road, Via Gap road.

Wood: You're talking about on beyond the Via place up on top of the mountain now?

Moody: From the Via Cemetery going directly west to the Skyline Drive.

Wood: I have been across that road but it's been umpteen years ago.

Moody: There was supposed to have been a company there that, The Ford (?) Company, that was a tanbark company. Between that road and Blackrock Gap road, did you know anything about that, or had they gone?

Wood: No. I'm not familiar with that at all. That was before my time.

Moody: Let me ask you what the general reaction of people in the area. Now some of the Via land and so forth was taken over by the Park, not all of it. And some of the Marshall land, and so forth.

And I imagine it affected the people, even if their land wasn't taken over. What was the general reaction? You were up there at that time, I guess.

Wood: Yes. There was no, at that time I think the Park Service was paying a dollar an acre. You either accepted a dollar an acre or they would condemn it and take it. So you had no alternative, at that time. There was a certain amount of resentment amongst the, you might say homesteaders in the area, but the Park left them land that they could propagate and so on, so it wasn't a major catastrophe, because the majority of it was mountain land anyway, which was of no, you know, consequent value, other than just for timber. But they didn't cut timber anyway. No one up there cut timber. Never did.

Moody: Well so much of that area was clear.

Wood: Yeah, this was cleared. It's very difficult to say how far back you know that the timber was taken off of it. But the majority of the timber that was taken off was converted to their own use. It was not something that was taken off and sold. Now the Sipeses (?) who lived in this house that you showed tonight with the chimney, there was a number of the Sipeses who cut pulpwood and hauled it out of there. Some of the boys, Louis Sipeses boys used to haul some pulpwood out.

Moody: Which lumber was that, which wood?

Wood: This would have been poplar. Poplar wood. It's what they usually cut and hauled out. And I think they took it to the Wayne Veneer (?) Corporation. Somewhere in the Valley. They hauled it out and took it and sold it.

Moody: I came across a court case where Bob Via, it has Bob Via's name, I imagine there were other people involved, where he took

the whole issue of the state condemning the land to give to the Federal Government for a park. He, it went to the Supreme Court under the name of the Via Case. Did you hear anything about that?

Wood: No, I'm not at all familiar with that situation, no. I don't recall any discussion on it.

Moody: What else can you tell me just about the neighbors in the area? Anything about any of the Vias or the Marshalls, or the Bargers?

Wood: In generalities as far as their character and so on?

Moody: Yeah, just anything I can find out about them.

Wood: Well, like I said before, they were very simple people. They lived simply, and they were good neighbors. They would help you and you would help them, and so on. As I said, the crime rate was zero; there just wasn't any. Every once in a while somebody, some of the clan would get maybe a little charged up on his own concoction, and maybe raise a little Cain or something like that, but other than that they were perfectly all right.

Moody: You don't ever remember any trouble with a Gilbert (?) Via, son of Will Via. They moved to Pennsylvania. They may have been gone already at that time.

Wood: The name Gilbert Via is very familiar. It seems to me, didn't he murder someone?

Moody: Something of that nature.

Wood: I think there was something related to Gilbert Via, he murdered somebody and he left here to escape the law. It sticks in my mind since you mentioned it.

Moody: He was the son of Will Via and, yeah, this is more or less the story I heard. It may have been an accident or a fight or

something of this nature but there was a death.

Wood: Yes, there was. Yeah, Gilbert killed someone, some member of the family. An immediate member of the family. And he left here and left the state. I recall it very faintly. This is going way on back, now. But I do remember a discussion, back when I was a kid, relating to this murder. There was a murder involved. And I don't think he was ever apprehended, to my knowledge.

Moody: The story I heard -- I don't know whether to believe this or not, it's quite an involved story -- Gilbert moved to Pennsylvania and killed himself. And the body was to be sent back and buried in this graveyard, the Minnie Via graveyard there. And so they went up and they dug a grave and everything, and the body didn't come back. And so they were getting ready to close up this grave; it was bad luck to leave it open; and a son of Dan Via named Tom Via, he said don't close it up, and he said "It's only bad luck for Gilbert's mother Aunt Addie. She's the next one who's going to die, and nobody cares about her anyway." And then he kept a still in this grave for a number of years. It never got found.

Wood: (unintelligible)

Moody: And then he drowned and they buried him in the grave. They buried Tom in it. But anyway that's the story I heard.

Wood: Do you recall seeing that tombstone with Hubert Via on it?

Moody: No.

Wood: Hubert committed suicide. He was the last one that I recall. Hubert was about 23.

Moody: Do you know who his father was?

Wood: Probably was Dan Via. Minnie Via's husband. I'm sure Minnie's husband was named Dan. Hubert committed suicide; for some

strange reason, we don't know why, he did. The roads up to the Minnie Via place was practically almost inaccessible. They went somewhere, went over into the Valley, and contacted an undertaker over there. And he tried to get the hearse up there and he couldn't get the hearse up there. So what they did, they prepared the body. They didn't embalm it or anything. And they kept him out for three days. Well, I was in the funeral procession when they were going up, carrying the casket from Minnie Via's place up to the Pearl (?) place. And the stench was something else to be desired. Fortunately I wasn't big enough to have to carry the casket. But I can recall carrying the casket up, and I remember some of the bearers mentioned the fact that you could hear him sloshing in his coffin. So you can imagine what it amounted to. But they couldn't get the hearse up there to get the body out of there. The roads were, you know, almost impossible in certain places, and these hearses are built rather low to the ground anyway, and chances are this was a \$7,000 piece of equipment the man had and he said "I'm not going to take my hearse up in that place." So he didn't do it. So they just went up there and dressed him up in his Sunday go-to-meeting suit and sent him on up the hill. So what else do we have? Anything else?

Moody: Remember any other Vias?

Wood: Let me think; there was a lot of Vias I can recall.

Moody: There was Will and Addie and Bob, and I've got her name somewhere. Well, let me ask you this. The houses. The father of these Vias, Dan and Will and so forth, was old man Chris Via. He was dead in 1906. But anyway, he's buried in that graveyard. And in the graveyard, down the other side of the hill, down toward Jones River, which would be going back into the Park.

Wood: That would be Jones River? That would be (?) going back toward Devils River.

Moody: Well, Jones and Doyle run together. It would be the Jones and the

Wood: It would be the first branch coming in, yeah.

Moody: Yes. Just about a half mile on that side of the Minnie Via Cemetery is a great big homesite. It looked like a house that had a large porch, and there is sort of a pond area, and

Wood: There's no structure there now.

Moody: No, no structure. It's on land that the name on the map is Wright and Early, and I've been trying to place that house. It would have been right about here.

Wood: Well, my grandfather's father lived somewhere in that immediate vicinity. And I'm thrying to think of his name was Ed Harris. This was my grandfather's father. He had a bunch of slaves. I think he had at least ten slaves.

Moody: Up on the mountain?

Wood: Yeah, up on the mountain. He bought these slaves. Now what he didas far as, this could very possibly be the case you were relating to, as far as the site. I have been to it, but it has been 30 years ago at least since I was at this site. Although it's still open to some degree; it's not grown up to any extent. It's pretty much open like pasture fields.

Moody: Well, not a big field, but just a small clearing.

Wood: Yeah, clearing. This could very possibly be. It's somewhere around immediately, because after you go past the Via Cemetery, like you said heading over down kind of like an easterly direction, is where this is.

Moody: Northeast. Almost north.

Wood: Almost north?

Moody: Because you go east and you hit Cedar Mountain.

Wood: Oh no, this was on beyond Cedar Mountain. See, Cedar Mountain lays like. (Note: both are apparently now consulting a map.)

Moody: Here's Cedar Mountain.

Wood: OK. Now, here's Via Gap. Coming on in here too, see. This is the headwater. This is where Minnie Via's place is, here. Right here.

Moody: Now this is where the house was, right here.

Wood: No, no. This is on beyond Cedar Mountain back over in this area, right along in this area here, right here is where it was.

Moody: And that was your great grandfather?

Wood: That was my great grandfather's place.

Moody: That was over on Doyle River.

Wood: Yeah, right, that's where that was. On the other side of Cedar Mountain.

Moody: So he must have been neighbors of the Browns.

Wood: Entirely possible. That could be.

Moody: This was another house. You have no idea who lived in that one, very close to the cemetery.

Wood: No, I sure couldn't tell you.

Moody: Was that a big Via house on the south side of the cemetery on Moormans River side?

Wood: Oh, yes, it was quite a large house.

Moody: I guess Dan Via.

Wood: Yeah, Dan Via place.

Moody: Below the cemetery.

Wood: Yeah; right, where does it start and where the stream starts.

Moody: Stream starts over here.

Wood: Right in here. The house sat right in just this right here, right here. That's where the house sat.

Moody: And that was supposed to have had a huge porch?

Wood: Oh, yes, had a big long porch on it, yes.

Moody: I couldn't find anything around there.

Wood: You won't find anything there but a rock foundation. You couldn't find the foundation.

Moody: Hm-m.

Wood: There's two springs. There's a spring where one of the streams starts.

Moody: There is a hunting cabin up there, but I don't think that would be the same site. I really don't know. I think the hunting cabin would have been further down because it's on the stream actually. But there are just so many blackberry bushes growing up there now, it's kind of hard to find anything.

Wood: The best time to find these sites is in the wintertime when the vegetation's down.

Moody: That's what I figured. I'll have to go back. Remember anything about the Marshalls in particular: Milton and Bob Marshall?

Wood: Milton yes, I knew Milton very well. His wife's name was Vera (?) And they lived in this house before the Sipeses. The one with the rock chimney. That's where they lived. I think that was the first place that they lived, where they homesteaded.

Moody: Did they build that house?

Wood: Yes, uh-huh. They built that house, yeah. Now the other person that I was trying to think of a while ago

(NOTE background noise makes this part of the tape almost unintelligible.)

Wood: coming on down.

Moody: The other chimney, huh?

Wood: That's right, where the other chimney is. That was quite a place too. Quite extensive I when that house was standing. Also, up above Marshall house, another house. This was up beside the creek across from beside the stream. The Marshall house. a quarter of a mile, on the left-hand side, there was another house. This was before you got up to where the old school house was.

Moody: Yeah, I have a house marked here below the school house.

Wood: That was a house that's right.

Moody: And that would be Bob Marshall?

Wood: No. Yes, it was the Bob Marshall house. It was the Bob Marshall house. There was a lived in that, one of Ned (?) Via's sons lived in that house. Now the Ned that Bob Marshall had before this one (??) What the heck was his name? Lived in that house.

Moody: I don't know the names of Dan's sons.

Wood: Hez (?) Via. Hez was his name, lived in that house. I think you spell it h-e-z.

Moody: Could it have been Hezekiel or something like that? Or Hezekiah?

Wood: Could have been Hezekiah, or Hezekiel, but they called

him Hez. Lived in that house up there, right above, below the school, where the school place was, and also where this other house was, where the Marshall place was.

Moody: Well, what happened to all the Vias. Did they all move to Pennsylvania? Do you have any idea?

Wood: Hm-m. Some of them ^{are?} were living in the Valley. Some of the Vias moved to the Valley. Now where area they're living I don't know, but some of them moved to the Valley.

Moody: Do you know of anyone else that we could contact who lived up there?

Wood: I know one man who lives somewhere in the vicinity of Staunton who could, this the man I'm trying to think of his name now. And he could tell you, I'd say he's in his 70's. And he could go right on back, and he's the one that lived in the house down the river from the Marshall place, where the chimney is.

Moody: It's not Harrison or Rhinehart or

Wood: No, no. Rhinehart wouldn't help you any. Purcell (?) Rhinehart, I mean Rhinehart, and Percy Faulkner, which is his first name's Percy. Percy owned a beautiful estate just outside of Charlottesville three miles, outside of town here. He and Rhinehart were in business together, when they were building Fort Lee, in World War I. They were contractors. And this is where they made all their money.

Moody: But they never lived in the mountains.

Wood: No, no. They would come up there, now, Percy would, but not Rhinehart. He'd never visit up there.

Moody: What about music up in the mountains?

Wood: Mostly make y'own. Old mountain music, banjos, guitars,

very few guitars, banjos primarily, fiddles.

Moody: Were there any dulcimers?

Wood: No dulcimers, no. I think the dulcimers belong to North Carolina.

Moody: Yeah, that's what I'm finding out, after we made such a big deal

Wood: There were no dulcimers in this area that I know of.

Moody: Yeah, that seems to be what we're finding out. Were there ever any kind of get-togethers?

Wood: Oh, yes, they'd have get-togethers. They'd have applebutter stirrings. We called them applebutter stirrings. Well all of the women would get together and they'd peel apples all day long. The men they would go out and gather apples, and they'd bring them in, and then they'd have a, the women they'd peel apples in the afternoon, and then that night is when they would have the applebutter stirrings. They'd have these big brass kettles, I mean huge things. And it was quite a thing to have the youngsters, particularly the teenagers, they seemed to thoroughly enjoy stirring applebutter together. So you had to constantly stir this applebutter all the time while it was cooking so it wouldn't burn. So the boys were on one side and the girls on the other, you know, and this type of thing. It was just a good, congenial arrangement between the youngsters. So the oldsters (?) and they had women stirring the applebutter. All the youngsters did the applebutter stirring. And after they got it all cooked they would can it, put it up in cans you know and so on.

Moody: Then they had dancing after the applebutter was all

Wood: Oh yes, they'd have dancing, cause they had their own

like I said, their own refreshments you know. They either brought it or somebody furnished it or something like that. It was a very arrangement between them.

Moody: Anything else you remember? I'm pretty much out of questions. You certainly have a lot of information.

Wood: Well gee whiz, I'm sorry I can't furnish you more information than I've given you .

Moody: Oh, no, you've been terrifically helpful, because as I say, we have like nothing on the southern section. We can't just say

Wood: I wish I could relate on down further south of my grandfather's place. Like I say, I've got pictures of the homestead and surrounding area. What I do, just pass them out to some member of the family. My mother she's got a whole bunch of them. My son has a bunch of them. He's quite a historian as far as digging back into, and he's gone back on the Woods' side of the family, which was on my father's side, and he's done quite an extensive research tracing back into the Woods' history tree. But very little in relation to the Harrises. The only thing came up with with some Harrises one time, he came up with a quite an extensive collection of books. Old books. Cloth-bound books. Going back into 1800's. But these, the Harrises were associated with back in a place called, most of the Wood families came from out of around Boonesville, and Doyleville, and this general area.

Moody: Well then wouldn't those Woods tie in with the Woods that go back to the 1700's, Woods and Jarmons Gap?

Wood: Oh yes, they all are related. They're all tied together. The Woods, the Brieses (?)

Moody: The Woods were the original mountain settlers.

Wood: Right. The Woods, the Bruces (?), the Waltons. There were so many Waltons and Woods that were married. My grandmother was a Walton. And he has a lot of material relating back you know to that. But getting back onto the Harris side of the family, it's rather sparse. There's very little information can be found on the Harris's side.

Moody: Did your grandfather ever move out of the mountain, or did he die up there?

Wood: He died up there. He was born in the mountains and died in the mountains. How he ever got there, that's a good question. Cause I don't know. Somewhere, he migrated up there, I promise you that. And I still think my great grandfather's name was Ad (?) Ad Harris.

Moody: And your grandfather never had any run-ins with the Park Service?

Wood: No.

None.

Moody: I wouldn't think too many people came into that southern section for a long time. Most people probably went up around Skyland. Tourists.

Wood: Yeah. It's kind of hard to pin it down exactly what, now some people you see lived right in the Park, where the Park itself proper took over. Particulatly all in the southern part, when you move on down. So I don't know what their basic reaction was to it. But I don't think, like the Vias and my grandfather and so on, they took a portion of their land, yes. But they didn't take it to the extent that problem and concern, because they had more land than they knew what to do with anyway. They said they paid them a dollar an acre for it. So they come and took 500 acres, that's

500 dollars, you know what I mean. And 500 dollars at that time, 1938, was well it was like opening King Tut's tomb. ~~There was no~~

Moody: There was never any settlement up on Cedar Mountain, was there?

Wood: Settlement? No, not to my knowledge. There was never anything on Cedar Mountain. Cedar Mountain proper, no.

Moody: What about animals? Did you ever see a deer back then?

Wood: Oh, yes. Deer up in that area, until the Park Service opened, a deer was a rarity. We rarely ever saw a deer. I daresay due to the fact that, probably the reason why we didn't see deer, was because it was, you know. They were very, you might say, elusive, at that time. Since the Park opened up they're accustomed to automobiles and traffic and you know noise, and people and this type of thing, so they've become more docile with the encroachment of people. So I would say that probably this is why they're not as timid as they used to be. The bear, same thing with the bear. Cause when the Park Service opened up, there was no such thing as seeing a bear. You just didn't.

Moody: Yeah, that's what I've heard.

Wood: There were no bear. And like I said, deer would be a rare occasion if you ever even got a glimpse of one. And if you got a glimpse (?) or something you'd say "What was that?"

Moody: But did you do much trapping of small animals?

Wood: No. Practically no trapping whatsoever, because it was such an inaccessible, well, you might say, if you trapped, how would you get your furs to the market? So the closest place you could take a fur too was Staunton. So the time and the effort and so on in trapping, well I'm not saying it would not have been a lucrative venture.

But getting it to market and so on, and trouble and so on, it just wasn't worth it. So you . No one did.

Moody: Yeah, don't hear much about that. So. I wish I could track down some more of these people.

Wood: Gee, I wish I were in a position to tell you more. But I am at a total loss at the moment. I do want you to leave me your name and address, though, that I can get in touch with you, so that when these things come up I can put you you know in contact with people. This one man in particular. He can tell you almost just about everything about the southern portion that you're looking for now, from my grandfather's place on down. He can put you in touch with, I mentioned Coon (?) Shifflett a while ago. Up on Pasture Fence, coming on down like going toward the reservoir, there was a number of people who lived down in that area, I think it was about six families. They lived down here, coming on down, well they weren't, they were up on the mountain, they were not up in this general area up in here is where they were. Down, down, stretched down this way. So this may fill you in quite a bit. It would take someone who's older than I am to get you filled in on that.

Moody: Well you certainly remember a lot about the details of what it was like up there, because I really feel that it was different particularly at that time than it was in the rest of the Park area. Because they talk about people being so poor further north in the Park area you know, and not having enough food to eat and this kind of thing.

Wood: I feel sorry for them. The opportunity was there, I can tell you now. They had the same situation as my grandfather had, because he was the most independent man you ever saw in your life.

Moody: Well they had a bad, there was a combination of things up there people talk about. They talk about the chestnut blight, and they talk about drought in the '30's, and then the Park coming in and not letting them open up new fields, or shoot animals that were killing their livestock, and this kind of thing, and just the combination of factors seemed to wipe the people out.

Wood: No, I have no knowledge of that whatsoever. I do remember the blight, I mean I don't remember the blight but I recall the aftermath of the chestnut blight. I'm my mother, who's 74, love you to talk to her, but I tried to talk to her Sunday. I went up to see her Sunday so I could, you know, maybe she could, you know, fill me in on some information. But her mind is, you know, drifted off, and she has less knowledge of the mountain than I do. You know she was born and raised up there. She remembers certain people's names, but as pinning down, of course it's been probably 30 years since she was up back on the mountain. I go up there quite frequently. I hike up. In fact, as I said this past summer I drove up. It was quite a hassel to get up there but I made it.

Moody: I guess so. From ^uMount_Afair.

Wood: Uh-huh. From Mountfair there's a fire trail goes up. Goes right up on top of the mountain, comes right up in the gap between my grandfather's place and the Barger (?) place. In fact it comes out right on the Barger place. gap there. Well, I'll see what I can come up with, any additional information, and send you what I can. I'm going to send you a picture for confirmation of this one. It's a duplicate. Exactly the one you have.

Moody: I'm just going to have to go back there.

Wood: It's a duplicate. Do you get there walking (?) around

by yourself? How do you manipulate this?

Moody: Well I've only been, yeah, I've been to Via Cemetery many times with groups, but I only went up on Pasture Fence once, just my husband and I went up exploring, and we took all those pictures. We came down Moormans River from the cemetery, looking for all the Via homesites. Didn't find too much. Found something that looked like my red chicken house, and a couple of sort of cleared areas, but nothing until we got down to that old Sipes there.

Wood: The Sipes the Marshall place.

Moody: But then I went up that other way, and went up there, you know, by all those hunt club places, I guess the last one was the Barbour (?) place, and that's still used quite a bit.

Wood: What they did, see, some of the, some member of the Barbour (?) family has taken over that place up there. In fact

Moody: Yeah, their name is still on the "No trespassing" signs.

Wood: Right, that's right. They got a chain across the gate going up to the going up to it, they got a chain across it. I found out this this summer. And they have "No trespassing" and all that sort of stuff so I just completely ignored them and went up to the springs, but my boy there (?) was in that spring there when I took that picture. Cause that is some beautiful water that comes out of that spring. Just as cold. And then I noticed on back on Pasture Fence, in back of the old house, someone's gone back in there and cleared off a whole new clearing back in against the side of the mountain there; I don't know whether you noticed that or not. Did you notice that?

Moody: The whole area was clear. There were cattle up there when we were there.

Wood: No, well there's cattle on the mountain. But there's some of the, I don't know whether this is the Johnsons or the Walters or some of them still put cattle up there to pasture, on Pasture Fence, although there's no one up there to look after them, they still take them up there.

Moody: Is your grandfather buried up there?


Wood: Yeah. He's buried.

Moody: Is there any kind of marker, or is it just a

Wood: Well, yes. The graveyard is rather difficult to find. From the angle that you took the picture from, if you backed up 200 feet and went directly to your right, right on the exact level of that hilltop, you'll find a cemetery.

Moody: We found a cemetery that was nothing, there was a little piece of a gate, I mean there wasn't anything inside or anything. I mean it was all overgrown.

Wood: From where you took the picture?

Moody: Yeah, it was near there. We took a compass and used the map, cause it was on the  USGS map, and that was the only way we could find it. And there was just a little piece of a gate, and just a little tiny thing where everything was grown up, you know, in the middle of the pasture.

Wood: Well that was it. That was the cemetery. There is still a little piece of gate there.

Moody: Yeah.

Wood: Yeah, that was it. Just a couple strands of barbed wire. Yeah, that was it.

Moody: And that was the Harris family cemetery.

Wood: that was the Harris family cemetery. My grandfather

and three of his children are buried there. They're members of the Harris family are buried there.

Moody: We were looking for something like the Via place.

Wood: No, that was it. Just down just a ways from where you took the picture, looking down on the house.

Moody: Were there ever any stones in there.

Wood: Yeah. The cattle had gotten into it, and there was one white stone my mother put there, but it had been broken off and it was laying down, the last time I was up there this summer.

Moody: We might have seen it.

Wood: Yeah, a little piece of white stone, just a headstone

Moody: Now this was the cemetery that's marked on the USGS map.

Wood: M-hm. Yeah. Right on top of the hill above the house.

Moody: Yes, you can see the house from it.

Wood: See the house from it.

Moody: That seemed to be the trend then: put your cemetery on top of the hill above where you lived.

Wood: Oh put the cemetery on top of the hill.

Moody: Vias did the same thing.

Wood: I know. Isn't that strange? The only thing I can think of as a possibility of why they put it on top of the hill would be the fact that for some strange reason, I don't know why, but old people had a morbid fear of water in their grave. Did you know that? Oh yes, they did. Had a morbid fear of water getting into their grave. So they put it up on the hilltop. So there was no water, and they had good drainage.

Moody: Lots of snakes when you were up there?

Wood: Never saw them snakes (?) In fact I even looked for a snake and I couldn't find it. My grandfather'd come home just any time, with a half a dozen rattlers in his pocket, of rattlesnakes that he had killed. on Cedar Mountain back in here, that place is snake-infested.

Moody: We went all the way up there and didn't see one.

Wood: That was surprising, because grandfather was afraid of rattlesnakes, and Cedar Mountain was one place he was very leery of. He used to go ginseng hunting. Did you ever hear (??) of ginseng?

Moody: We got ginseng hunters in the Park now.

Wood: Yeah.

(NOTE: Side 1 ends here. Side 2 is blank.)