

Robert Childress

Robert Childress was born October 7, 1926 in Skeggs, Southwest Virginia. At 15, he and his family moved to Prince William County and rented Bushy Park, the land talked about in the following interview, where he worked with his father and brother Reves as a farmer. He was a member of the Navy in WW2, before coming back to Bushy Park after the war ended. Soon, he moved to Stonewall acres, purchasing a plot of land and building a house. He married Pearl Lorane Jones in 1952 in Manassas, and had two daughters, Paula and Robin, and one son, Robert Childress Jr, who accompanies his father in the interview.

Robert worked several jobs in construction, and at one point partnered with his brother to create Childress Brothers Construction Company. Robert served in the Navy during the Korean War as well. He eventually retired from Giant Construction Co., and moved to the Shenandoah Valley after retiring to farm. Robert Childress passed away in November 2024.¹

¹ Legacy. 2024. "Robert Childress Obituary (1926 - 2024) - Manassas, Va - Northern Virginia Daily." Legacy.com. Legacy. December 6, 2024. <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/nvdaily/name/robert-childress-obituary?id=56932961>.

Transcript of Oral History Interview with Robert Childress

Interviewee: Robert Childress (RC) & Robert Childress Jr. (RCJ)

Interviewer: Bill Backus (BB)

Date: Friday, February 10 2023

Interview Location: Bushy Park

Please keep in mind that this document is a verbatim transcription of the spoken word rather than a written document.

RC: This is where my, driveway come in here.

BB: OK.

RC: We had a garden here, acre and a half. (unintelligible) Horse barn with a hay loft. And a tool shed there. And uh that was at mill cast I was talking about and that's that little stoop we build off there.

BB: OK.

RC: And uh. Corn corn crib storage here. And then you come on, come on down here you had uh, tool shed for machinery.

BB: OK.

RC: And uh steer lot. They used to get feeder steers in over the fall, get about 50-60 head and feed them for about 3 months that's when we feed them by silage, and cotton seed meal, and there's a hay mountain here where we used to put hay in for 'em.

BB: Okay.

RC: And uh.

RCJ: Dad, before you, before you go any further on them feeder steers, umm. When you got-you've told me many times once y'all got them fattened in the February time frame y'all would drive them-

RC: On, on the road.

RCJ: -out Catharpin road, to Haymarket.

RC: We hit 55 and drive them down to Gainesville.

BB: OK.

RCJ: There was stop pens at the railroad in Gainesville.

RC: Ship, ship them out on railroad?

BB: Okay, okay.

RCJ: Couldn't imagine doing that today?

BB: (laughs)

RC: We'd have to run- they'd be about half a dozen of us around them- And we'd have to run ahead and stand in people 's driveways, which wasn't very many driveways-

BB: Yeah.

RC: -So the cattle went by and then you run again. Those of another driveway.

BB: So you're doing this mostly on foot?

RC: Yeah

BB: Okay.

RC: And then get out to 55, we had somebody holding up the traffic, which wasn't very many traffic at that time.

BB: Okay.

RC: So we get to go down 55 into Gainesville.

BB: Huh. That's wild.

BB & RC: (Laughs)

RCJ: I wanted to make sure he relayed that story I, I chuckle every time I hear. So go ahead I didn't mean to interrupt you I just-

RC: Anyway, this was a cow barn here. I should have drawn it, but there was a walkway from a silo all the way down the middle and manager to build off on each side-

BB: Okay.

RC: -where you feed the steers and the cows, where the milk cows on this side.

BB: Okay.

RC: And uh. And then they had that lock here, and then you get over here you had a lane. Went all the way down here to the back field. This was crops. They probably, 35-40 acres here, and then about 30 acres there. I don't know how many acres was in that one but.

BB: Okay.

RCJ: You said that was the orchard right? The apple and pears you told me one time you had about-

RC: Oh yeah that's for corn and stuff here.

BB: Okay.

RC: We'd usually have a- we didn't stay around long enough to rotate all the way through the cycle- but we'd have, there's about 6 fields I think. And we had a field of corn, field of wheat-

BB: Okay.

RC: -field of clover. And then when uh, the wheat would sew the wheat and then when the wheat stubble that'd fall. We'd sew orchard grass and clover on that.

BB: Okay.

RC: And then we cut up and get it orchard grass. For hay for the next 3 years of (unintelligible).

BB: Okay, okay.

RC: And we didn't, you didn't have you didn't corn it to death, you know, corn draws a lot of strength out of the ground.

BB: Yeah.

RCJ: And did you relate- um, uh, might have missed it- when y'all. The family moved there in early 42, everything was done by horses-

RC: Yeah.

RCJ: -the workhorses. Y'all had about 6 workhorses. The plowing, the cultivating, cutting the hay, um, dragging, harrowing and all that. Right?

RC: Yeah. It was all horse drawn. And then we would get somebody to come in with a, a, binder to cut the. Cut this. Wheat.

RCJ: Stubble.

RC: And the. That binder would tie tie, like a bundle, and you'd kick it off. And then we go through and, shock it, with the heads up off the ground you know. And then later on then would get it this guy come around with a threshing machine and he thrash you. All lower to grad. We didn't know which grass anybody owned shocking and all and they'd they'd. With that. Uh. What I'm trying to say.

RCJ: What chopper where you cutting cutting the, cutting the wheat and orchard grass and then would bundle it and just leave it in shocks in the field? Is that what you're saying?

RC: Yeah. And, and most times we'd cut the hay. Cut the hay. I think it's here. I should look I'm trying to see which one of the fields. I guess it's the field over here. We'd cut the hay, and have it building a big mound, you know, and then when we'd bring a thrashing machine in, they blow that straw on top of that.

BB: Okay.

RC: And then we'd turn cattle in on around them, in the winter time, and they'd cut tunnels through there.

BB: (Laughs.)

RCJ: One, one thing I thought was important to, to mention was um. Between you and granddaddy John and your older brother Reves, during the spring and summer you all pretty well handled the labor needs-

RC: Yeah.

RCJ: -of the, the farm. But in the fall of the year, when you got into cutting and chopping corn, you'd have to hire outside help.

RC: Yeah, when we fill the silo, we'd had to hire some help.

BB: Okay.

RCJ: And you told me that- you- granddaddy would send you with the truck-

RC: Yep.

RCJ: -up to the store, at Thoroughfare. On 55.

RC: (unintelligible)

RCJ: And there was a large African American community up there²-

RC: Yes.

RCJ: -and there would be black laborers that kind of hung around that store in the morning looking for work. Because again this is close to the end of the- well probably still technically in a depression. And if I misinterpret or state what you're saying, tell me, but you would go up there. Now what was you 15-16 years old at the time-

RC: Yeah.

RCJ: -with the truck. And tell the, the gang of guys that were around the store what kind of work you had for them on the farm that day. And the ones that had experience in chopping cutting corn feeling the silo, threshing wheat. Whatever it was-

RC: Yeah.

RCJ: -You would get 5 or 6 of them

RC: Yeah.

RCJ: -haul them to the. Back to the farm, from the store. They would work all day, for, did you say 50 Cent an hour?

RC: 50. 50 or 75 cents an hour, I don't remember exactly.

RCJ: Plus grandma would feed him a big hot lunch.

RC: Yep. Yeah, she cook them hot biscuits and fried chicken and-

² This African American community Richard Childress Jr mentions is Thoroughfare, established by freed African American men and former Enslaved Individuals after the end of the Civil War. If you would like to learn more about this historic community, please view our interactive storymap: PWC Historic Preservation. 2022. "Historic Thoroughfare." ArcGIS StoryMaps. Esri. November 2, 2022. <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/d583585695b54a4d8b8941c84a325691>.

RCJ: Vegetables and such.

RC: -Taters and vegetables and all that stuff. And they put it away too. (Laughs).

RCJ: And. And you said that for the most part the guys were, were good, hard workers. Correct?

RC: Oh yeah.

RCJ: And uh. And then at the end of the day, close to dark or whenever you got finished, you would haul them back up to the store.

BB: Okay.

RC: I had a little, international pickup. Had racks built on it, and they just stand in the bed of that thing holding onto the racks.

BB: (laughs). Now, can you remember a little bit of thoroughfare? Like, what does Thoroughfare look like? Do you remember any thoroughfare?

RC: But nothing there but just that one little store building.

BB: Okay. Did you go to Thoroughfare a lot besides just getting laborers for the farm?

RC: Yeah. And that said, when I go to Beverly Mill³-

BB: Yeah.

RC: -I'd go to through Thoroughfare all the time.

BB: Okay, okay.

RC: And we raised uh. We raise hogs. And you couldn't get maybe 5 cents a pound for it you get more for a baby pig 6 weeks old than you could for 2 or 3, hundred pound hogs.

BB: Wow.

RC: I used to haul them to the Manassas market-

BB: Okay.

RC: -stock sale them.

³ "Beverley Mill Aka Chapman's Mill." 2025. Pwcva.gov. 2025. <https://www.pwcva.gov/department/planning-office/beverley-mill-aka-chapmans-mill>.

RCJ: You told me at that time the stock sale, uh. Was it the Manassas stock sale down at Yorkshire on, on 28-

RC: Yeah down there.

RCJ: -where Lowe's auction used to be right before you go across Bull Run Bridge on the right.

BB: Okay. Yup I know where that is.

RCJ: Or if you're on 28.

BB: Yup.

RCJ: It would be back from the bridge maybe-

RC: Yeah, couple of 100 yards.

RCJ: Yeah.

BB: Okay.

RCJ: And then the stock sale at Marshall, that was in existence then, right?

RC: Yeah.

RCJ: On 55 and then the Nokesville stock sale out on 28. I, I don't think it's no longer there but.

BB: No.

RC: Well they had that Manassas stock sale over there too.

RCJ: Uh at Nokesville? I'm talking about the one at Nokesville.

RC: Oh no I uh didn't (unintelligible) one Nokesville.

RCJ: Ok. But those were primarily the 3 in-

RC: Yeah.

RCJ: -the area in the 40s right? So.

BB: Yeah I notice that you, you lived in Nokesville for a little bit. Can you describe living in Nokesville?

RCJ: Can you describe living in Nokesville? That house out on 28 yell ball and, and why, why you moved there. That's where you moved when you left Bushy Park?

RC: Well. Yeah well I know guys getting, have to go in [the] army or something. And uh, we moved there, and I worked about 3 different jobs that summer. I drove a dump truck down on that quarry they owned on 211.

BB: Okay.

RCJ: At the Fairfax County line.

RC: Oh right-

BB: Okay.

RC: Haul rock out of the quarry, dumping the crusher. That lasted maybe a month or 2. And then. Had a sister work down the Cameron station. And I've got a job down there, and I work down there just 3 months. And uh. I suppose they trained me to run a forklift. But a lot of days you wouldn't have no forklift, had more drivers than you had a forklift, and you did just have to do it do anything. Digging ditches cleaning wonders or what. I didn't, I didn't like that very much. And I told the guy I was working for I said "I'm gonna quit", he said "well you gotta resign". (laughs). So I went into the place where you resign. And then he filled out a form and he said, "why you, why you quitting?". I said, "well a lot of days that you have to Dig ditches now like that" and he said "well. If you go to the army and said you'd be digging foxholes?" I said, I said, "well, to tell you the truth, them, them shells don't fit my hands,". And they put it on that earlier it on my resignation paper.

RC: (Laughs).

BB: Um. And I- oh sorry-

RCJ: Your, your 3rd job when you live there at the house in Nokesville, you went to work for the railroad, Norfolk Southern railroad.

RC: Southern.

RCJ: Southern railroad? that's right at that time it was Southern.

RC: We got, we maintain the track from Bristo up to Catholic,

BB: Okay.

RC: we'd walk it. Somebody had to walk the track every day to check the spikes. And it backed out or anything. But uh. There's about a 6 man crew, and we had one of them little old carts. Gasoline carts where you run on railroad.

BB: Yeah.

RC: And the only bad thing about it. It was late, getting on the coach for Christmas. And then on that railroad traffic was heavy. And uh, we'd be working on the track. Tamping gravel down around the ties and, our foreman he'd be on that track before the train almost get on top of you before he pull you off. But he had to, cus that's the only way you got any work done.

BB: Yeah.

RCJ: That, that's where you was working when you got drafted and-

RC: Yeah.

RCJ: -and what, in October of 44 right?

RC: Yeah.

RCJ: And you was. We were just talking about this couple days ago. The house in Nokesville, why y'all moved there primarily, like you said you knew you were going to get drafted in 44-

RC: Yeah.

RCJ: -your older brother Reves was already drafted, and in the Navy and granddaddy was having some stomach issues-

RC: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

RCJ: -some health issues at that time so he couldn't run the farm at that time by himself. So that's why they moved to Nokesville and um, that house is right there, basically across from Fitzwater drive on the-

RC: Yeah.

RCJ: -North side of 28. The 2 story brick, brick house, I don't know if it's still there or not it's been years since I've been out through there but-

RC: She paid \$600 for a house and 6 acres.

BB: Wow. (laughs). Now I know that when you uh, you came back from the service, your dad was in Brentsville at the May farm?

RC: Well when I come back, they done move down to. Right across roads in the Florence place where we lived the first time.

BB: Okay.

RC: Little house out. And uh, that's when I got started working construction. And uh, that was in, uh 46. And Maria's dad, they decided to rent that farm, farm back.

BB: Okay.

RC: So that's when we moved up, here spring 47.

BB: Okay.

RC: And uh, Reves he's got an agriculture trainee, he was getting \$100.00 a month. And me and dad worked construction.

BB: Okay.

RCJ: That's when uh. Erthsry bought, bought it in 43, but you had told me that Erthsry was like, he was an attorney in DC but he was originally from the Carolinas. And he, he was all about truck farming, especially crops-

RC: Yeah.

RCJ: -and that summer that Reves was there farming, didn't he have some wild ideas about sweet corn, and sweet potatoes, and all this stuff, and selling it down to DC and-

RC: Too late in the season to put no sale part.

BB: Okay.

RC: And he brought a whole load of sweet corn back and fed it to the hogs.

RCJ: Reves did, right?

RC: Yeah we put a sign of, out the road, 'free sweets corn'. Man you should have seen the neighbors coming in now.

BB: (laughs).

RCJ: Oh so. Crazy times.

BB: So, were most of the, the roads dirt around here? The roads, when you grew up, or in Prince William, were they all dirt?

RC: Well, pretty much so, yeah.

BB: Okay.

RC: Yeah even 234 in. Well, all the way through Louden county and Manassas, that was all gravel.

BB: That was gravel?

RCJ: 28, and-

RC: And they put that uhh. First time they put them all round gravels on there. And man, that them things just thrown off, you know when traffic run good, fly them out, so uhh I guess uhh. That was late 40s when they black topped 234.

BB: Okay.

RCJ: You told me a story one time about 234, the paving. They started paving from the town of Manassas out toward the stone house in Catharpin.

RC: Yeah.

RCJ: And you went back in the service, in 1950 through the Korean War. And when you got back, they had paved out to just about where the, the high rise, and the old giant shopping center was, and you was riding a motorcycle out through there and something happened to you. why don't you relate that story? You got back from the service and-

RC: Yeah, I got married and, we're going to build. Wait let me back up a little bit. Mister Whitmore⁴ and, and Hickson was real estate. And they develop at Stonewall acres.

⁴ Mister Whitmore was the land owner of Bushy Park at the time.

"Bushy Park Historic Site." 2025. Pwcva.gov. 2025. <https://www.pwcva.gov/department/historic-preservation/bushy-park>.

BB: Yup.

RC: And uh. My sister bought a lot there, and our dad bought two lots, and I bought a lot. And we build, build a house there. And that's when I, when I come back and uh. Well we got married in 52, and when I got out of service in 54. How come we come back and- Well I let dad at it, he wanted to take the house to sell it. Because I didn't know how long I was going to be gone and all. And uh. He went and got a loan through, well I hadn't done the roof when I turned it over to him. And uh. He went ahead and finished it. Well it put the floor in it, and subfloor and. Framed inside and all and, drywalled it or plastered. And had it plastered all and rubbed the plummet in and. The warring and all like that and when I got back. He won't be there but he said Dallas. I want you take the loan over, you just move in there. I don't want nobody else up there. So that's where we live for, and I got me a motorcycle and got me a boat. Started flying a plane.

BB: Ohh, Manassas airport?

RC: I had a good, good full life.

BB: Okay. You flew out of the Manassas airport right there or, where'd you fly out of, what airport?

RC: Yeah they've got a little airport there or on gate Ron Gator.

BB: Right there on 234? Yep ,yep, yeah Okay.

RCJ: Near the shopping center. Get back to the story about going for the ride on your motorcycle and you run out of pavement going about 100 miles an hour that's where we-

RC: Oh yeah. I'd come in every evening, and hot summer down you know and. One had no shirt on, I'd jump on that old motorcycle, go out 234 towards stone house. And he had cut up for some kind of utility pipe across the road. And when they backfilled it had done sunk down about that far. And I was going out through there, I was running probably, 60-70 miles an hour. And I seen where that ditch was, and man I cracked it a little harder and I went across that thing.

BB: (laughs). Wow, ah.

RCJ: Ah.

RC: Yeah I had enough time and uh credits and uh. With the government flying I could have made commercial license!

BB: Okay.

RC: But I didn't, I just I flew and got later on the fall got kind of cool up there and I felt, well I'll, hang it up and I'll start again next spring, but I never did-

BB: Okay.

RC: Never did get back into it.

BB: Okay.

RCJ: Back to the farming operation there, you told me that uh, for any kind of the, the seed and, Harnesses. The leather goods, the bridles and harnesses for the horses and all, y'all would get at the Southern States in Manassas. That was about the only place around-

BB: Okay.

RCJ: -you could get the farm tools and equipment you needed right?

RC: Anyway (unintelligible name) bought a tractor when he bought the place. He uh, one of his clients, didn't have the money to pay him so he got took it over to Alice Chandler tractor-

BB: Okay.

RC: -revealed already. And he got the tractor and the plow. That disc is all he got with that tractor. And that made a little bit easier on farming, you know?

BB: Mm-hmm.

BB: But he didn't, the (unintelligible name) didn't want to fool them feed, feed cattle. So we never did get more feed steers.

BB: Okay.

RCJ: I know you said the tractor would make it easier, but you told me -and correct me if I'm wrong- that, with the horse drawn hay cutters you could cut about 15 acres of hay a day-

RC: Yeah.

RCJ: Which was a considerable amount of hay with a horse?

RC: Yeah.

BB: Wow. How many, how many people are on that crew cutting, cutting the hay with a Horse Was it just one person?

RCJ: Just want, just you or whoever just one person on the. Yeah just one-

BB: One, just one person? Okay.

RCJ: -on the piece of equipment, yeah.

RC: Yeah, they had a, hay cutter, had a sickle bar. You could raise it up you know-

BB: OK.

RC: -and put it down. About 8 foot long ,had sickle bar like thing, and, and 2 horses. And you just had a seat coming off on the back you said on that thing. And you had a lever there, you push that lever and it would raise that, you, you know if you run up, run up on a rock or anything like that, you can push that lever and that sickle bar would raise up. And then you drop it back down you know. You got that-

BB: Okay.

RCJ: Dad, you mentioned Stonewall acres. Granddaddy building the house there and y'all buying them lots. That's when y'all moved, when you moved off the farm Bushy park for the 3rd and final time. In what, '48 is when y'all moved to Stonewall acres correct?

RC: Yeah. Yeah, the last summer we lived here, we bought them lots and uh. What went ahead and built dad a house. And then later on I started me one.

BB: Okay. So I notice you have an outhouse on this, and you've been in you were back in the house couple of times in the 40s. Was there ever electricity in the house?

RC: A what?

BB: Electricity. Did you ever get electricity at the house?

RC: No, I don't think we ever had, it. Not that I, not that I remember of.

BB: Okay.

RCJ: I know you probably didn't have a telephone, did ya?

RC: Yeah, we had a telephone.

BB: You had a telephone?

RC: 2 arms and a short.

BB: Okay.

RCJ: Well I know you said you bought lamp oil up at Aldi's, so I didn't figure you had electricity-

BB: Yeah.

RCJ: -in there.

RC: You pick the phone up and. You can hear it; click click click click. Everybody, everybody on the road would listen in.

BB: Oh okay. (Laughs).

RCJ: Oh you, yeah you were telling me there was no inside bathroom, or no inside plumbing. The Well was right outside the kitchen.

RC: Yeah.

RCJ: And was it hand pump Well that y'all got your water, but you had a gasoline-

RC: Well it- a handpump, and it had another thing on it. Had a little gasoline pump there, where you hook that up, and, and that gas being pumped would raise, raise that pump up and down?

BB: Okay. Huh-

RCJ: And y'all use that same Well to pump water down to the barn, for the cattle.

RC: It must have been a heck of a Well if I recall. And we had all it feed cattle and all like that. We had enough water to finish it all up.

BB: Okay.

RCJ: Tell the story about the, the once a week bath you got in the kitchen in a, in a tub.

RC: Well that was mostly down the mountains when we-

BB: Oh-

RC: - we didn't have a whole lot of water.

RCJ: Oh.

BB: So you went to Manassas for, for movies. What else did you do for fun? When you're at Bushy Park, what did you do for fun when you're not farming? I know there weren't a lot of hours for it, but-

RC: Well you didn't have a whole lot of fun. (Laughs). Man, dad used to go in the woods on the, on Sunday. And found a, swampy place where they had water and these bees with water, and we we'd track them bees back to their hive.

BB: Okay.

RCJ: In trees.

RC: And I don't know. We found one, some of their, we found about 5 or 6 hives and then we cut that and get that honey.

BB: Oh wow. (Laughs).

RCJ: You told me you cut a big, big Hickory, like 5 foot diameter Hickory one time and, basically got about a wash tub full of honey out of it. Is that right?

RC: Yeah.

BB: Wow. Did you? I know you went to Gainesville lot for the farm. Gainesville, you went to Gainesville a decent amount of times for, for the farm?

RCJ: You went to Gainesville quite a bit for farming-

RC: Oh, yeah yeah yeah.

RCJ: -you know, either driving cattle or how big was- oh go ahead?

BB: And do you? Can you remember what Gainesville looked like back then?

RC: What much there just, Woods store on one corner or not? There's another store right on, the opposite corner had the post office-

BB: Okay.

RC: -and right up the road Johnny Clark had them built him cabins. And, on the other side of the road, on the corner of Linton Hall road did the filling stations.

BB: Okay.

RC: And down from Woods's store, there was a garage. And, that's about all that was there.

BB: Okay.

RC: Atlas, Atlas Iron⁵ wasn't even at fault at that point.

RC: (Laughs). Yeah.

RCJ: I remember that when I was a kid, but- Oh you told me that when y'all lived there at Bushey Park, you actually had a Gainesville address if you were closer to Catharpin in Haymarket, but I don't guess either one had a Post office?

RC: Yeah, Catharpin had a post office. Over there had a-

RCJ: Well that was just right across the street from you, but your address was Gainesville. Oh I didn't realize it was a post office now. You had 2 Sisters born there at Bushey Park in the mid 40s. I don't know if that's in that information you have or not Bill, but. You had a sister Joan Sue, that was born in November '42, and she died shortly after-

BB: Okay.

RCJ: -at the hospital in Alexandria. And then you had, I guess your youngest sister Kathy was also born there in March of '44. Not too, too long before you all moved to Nokesville, right?

BB: Did any of your siblings go to school at Catharpin school?

RC: No, there wasn't no. You say school?

BB: Yes, school.

RC: They want to. Kids went out there that. Haymarket.

BB: Haymarket? Okay they went to Haymarket?

RC: They had one sister that graduated from there, Faye.

⁵ Atlas Machine & Iron Works was "one of the largest steel fabricating plants in the Washington area". Palermo, Jill. 2015. "Made in Prince William: From Gainesville to New York's Skyline." INSIDENOVA.COM. October 7, 2015. https://www.insidenova.com/headlines/made-in-prince-william-from-gainesville-to-new-york-s-skyline/article_81130364-6ca6-11e5-aaf3-7722a4f6e37c.html.

BB: So what town do you think you went to? Or what community did you go to often when you lived at Bushy, was it Haymarket, Manassas, Gainesville, Woolsey?

RC: What?

RCJ: Where did you go, what community did you go to most when you lived there at Bushy Park?

RC: Oh Manassas I guess.

BB: Manassas? Okay.

BB: So do you, do you remember what Haymarket looked like?

RC: Haymarket? Well the only thing you had there was, had a store on one side of the road. Garage straight across road. I think Lewis Leitner run that-

BB: Okay.

RC: and down from there, they had a little telephone exchange building where the women sat in there and poke, poke at it.

BB: Mm-hmm.

RC: And that, and that's about the only thing we seen in Haymarket.

BB: Okay. Did you go up to the post office and the store at Woolsey? Occasionally, Woolsey did you go up to Woolsey, for the store?

RC: No.

BB: Okay, so you went to Haymarket instead.

RC: Yeah.

BB: Okay.

RCJ: Was- I would imagine, was 15 paved then in the 40s? Because 15 was probably the primary route through this area.

RC: No I think it was still. Maybe early 40s it was still gravel.

BB: Was it? Okay.

RCJ: The 55 wasn't, wasn't paved, was it?

RC: Yeah I think it, 55 was paved.

RCJ: Was it? Even when y'all was driving the cattle to Gainesville? The 55 was paid before 15?

RC: Yeah, yeah.

BB: Okay. So did you drive a lot around here, or were you just using the vehicles just for the farm?

RC: Mostly just for the farm.

BB: Just for the farm? Okay.

RC: Yeah.

BB: Okay.

RCJ: But you, you did tell me a story- I guess this would have probably been in '43 after- I guess Reves had done went into the Navy. He was gone and you and granddaddy was there on the farm and. Granddaddy started having stomach trouble, ulcers primarily and, about the only hospital in Northern Virginia at that time was in Alexandria and you just you couldn't get in it. So, the doctor sent him to the hospital in Charlottesville, right?

RC: Yeah, right.

RCJ: And. This was right after (Unintelligible Name) bought the farm and he had a new Packard, and he let you drive that Packard to Charlottesville to see granddaddy-

RC: Yeah.

RCJ: -a couple times, didn't he?

RC: Yep. I didn't even have no drivers license. (Laughs) I didn't get me no drivers license until I done bought me a new car in '48 .

BB: (Laughs).

RC: Well I had drivers license, but they belonged to my brother. When it? When Reves went, brother went the Navy, he left the driver license, home side issues them to buy beer and all that.

RCJ: Well you're about 15 or 16 at that point.

RC: Yeah.

RCJ: And you told me they didn't even. For years after that they didn't even have your picture on the drivers license, right? It's just a piece of paper or trooper issue.

RC: No, no they didn't.

BB: Ah. So, by this point you were kind of growing up- but, what are your thoughts about farming in Prince William County? Did you like it? did you not like? Was it- it was definitely hard work right?

RC: Yeah I liked doing-

BB: Okay.

RCJ: But you told me you didn't want to make a living of it.

RC: Right.

BB: Was that something that you think was, a lot of people felt that in Prince William? They didn't want to farm anymore?

RC: Yeah I think that the biggest thing.

BB: Okay.

RCJ: Well there was, there's quite a bit of work the closer to DC you've got, that they could make more money at than farming it.

RC: Well. In the late forties as they started a whole lot of building. All, you know-

RCJ: I, that was from the war boom I guess?

RC: Yeah, it probably was.

BB: Okay. So most people left to, find better jobs close to the DC. Okay.

RC: Well that time, probably farm labor, probably wasn't paying over 50 to 75 cents an hour, you know? You getting construction, all that gets is like twice as much you know.

BB: Wow.

BB: So I know it's a little after noon, I don't. I want to be cognizant of your time.

RCJ: We got all the time you need. Whatever, whatever you want to do, seriously. I don't want to hold you up from lunch, but we've got all day.

BB: Okay, so we'll just chat for a little bit more?

RCJ: Yeah.

RCJ: What's that one? There's that one sketch, that again I don't I've never been able to find a date on it other than the 65 date but. VRC I guess did some sort of a survey on it, you can probably look at it and tell when it was done or why it was done. But this was the sketch. Of course here's the original house, and the addition that granddaddy and dad put on it. And then, there's that addition that was put on the original front of the house. But as you can see, here's the drive in off of Catharpin road, to the house that was set on the right, and the barn and all that stuff was down the left. And the cemetery was shown, you know, one out in the field. And I don't, you know, it doesn't it doesn't say confederate cemetery. Everything I've read on it was 2 graves, and there was like a little wrought iron fence around it-

BB: Yep.

RCJ: -but you would have thought, if the VR or Historical Society was doing this, they would have been a little bit more detailed on what that was-

BB: Yeah well the cemetery-

RCJ: It is, you know, a major component of the historical value of that property.

BB: Yeah.

RCJ: Of why they would put it out there, and, and not over here where dad always recalls it being-

BB: Okay.

RCJ: -so just, just information for you here as a historian.

BB: Okay. Now when you were living in Bushy Park, did anyone talk about it being used as a hospital during the Civil War?

RC: Nah.

BB: No? Okay. Besides those 2 graves out front, there really wasn't any-

RC: No, we didn't know this house had all the history to it. (Laughs).

BB: Huh.

RCJ: But it makes sense. I didn't realize it was so close to the backside of the battlefield, but it would make sense to-

BB: Yep. So we're trying to figure out now if it was a hospital for a lot of guys, or just for the 2 guys that we know there were there. Because it's kind of a little bit far away, for a lot of the soldiers. So we're just trying to figure out if they were just really well-to-do and got their own hospital.

RCJ: Yeah and that makes sense. Yeah privates are one thing, Colonels and Captains are something else.

BB: Yeah. (Laughs).

RCJ: Way of life.

BB: Did you have to, what were some of the chores besides the, I know you're probably most with the farming, but do you recollect any chores he had to do with the house? Like a daily chores, any work around the house?

RCJ: Daily chores other than the farming?

RC: No not really.

BB: Was that all your sisters and your mother?

RC: Yes. Mama, she had a full time job you know. Like when we had the garden, you know and canning, and making preserves and all that stuff. And then in the fall we'd pick them apples and put them in a basement. And, one other thing I was going to show you. Right on in here we had a, about 10 or 15 pear trees.

BB: Pear trees?

RC: Yeah.

RCJ: So they weren't down in the orchard, they were separate?

RC: Yeah.

BB: Okay.

RCJ: Oh, one thing you did tell me, and may not have anything to do with burial sites, or history or, anything. But you said out here in the front yard, somewhere out here there was kind of a sump or something-

RC: Oh yeah.

RCJ: -and it's kind of right up on top of the hill, but in rainy weather water would- like right.

RC: Right around in there, just a low place and in the, when you get heavy rain, you might get a foot of water.

BB: Okay, Okay.

RC: And we had ducks, and the mother ducks will lay their eggs in that water. You'd have to wade through that water to get them eggs.

BB: (Laughs). Wow.

RCJ: Then maybe we'll just- geology, who knows but-

BB: There's a lot of stuff that's changing. It could be man made though, from the 1800s.

RCJ: You told me you all used to squirrel hunt back there in the woods, and-

RC: Yeah. Yeah, we had. As our woods, born raised in our woods here. This here used to all be woods-

(Large unintelligible part)

RC: There was a little stream went around through the house.

BB: Yeah I was going to ask, was most of it, because it's all farmland, most of it was all open-

RC: Yeah.

BB: -so there wasn't that many woods besides by water streams? Okay.

RCJ: You said this was about a 30-35 acres of crops and, because he just did this in the last couple of days and I really hadn't had a chance to look at it yet-

BB: Wow.

RCJ: What it, was this crops or hay crops.

RC: Crops yeah.

RCJ: This was pasture, and woods. This 30 acres, was this crops?

RC: Yeah.

RCJ: 35 acres was crops?

RC: Yeah.

RCJ: Pasture. How about this field, these fields upfront?

RC: That's corn, oh grain.

RCJ: So they were crop fields too.

RC: Yeah.

BB: Okay.

RCJ: And it was just pasture around the house. Did the cattle, was the cattle able to come right up around the house.

RC: Yeah.

BB: Okay, I was going to ask because I saw some of the pictures the grass, it's not mowed to like what we experienced today, but it's not tall grass. So just ask if the-

RC: Well, we had a dog, so the dog would keep the cattle run away my house, you know.

RCJ: Did the driveway sort of come down here to the barn, or just drive down through the grass?

RC: Yeah. Yeah you just drive around anywhere in here.

BB: Oh Okay. How big was this outhouse? There's just a one stall outhouse?

RC: 2 Stoll

BB: 2 stoll?

RCJ: So you could take a partner in them.

BB: (Laughs).

RCJ: What was it, 6 (unintelligible) or something like that, 4 (unintelligible), something like that or-

RC: What?

RCJ: The outhouse how big was it?

RC: 2, just one room.

RCJ: I know, what was the size, was it 4 by 8.

RC: It was probably about 6 foot by 4 foot.

BB: Okay.

RC: Had a Sears Roebuck catalog hanging on the wall.

RCJ: And that was the chicken house, and the corn crib.

RC: That corn crib had a drive through. (unintelligible) on both sides you get, drive a tractor right through the middle of it.

BB: Okay, wow. So it was a pretty big building. So for the tractor, and I know you said you had a machine for the pump too, how did you get the gas? Where did you have to go to get the gasoline for everything?

RC: Oh, Alis(?) store.

BB: Yeah. Okay, Alis store?

RC: Yeah.

BB: Okay.

RCJ: You said you just most of the time, well maybe you didn't when you got gas, but a lot of times you would just walk across because Alis was right over here-

RC: Yeah.

RCJ: -[off] 234 which is right up here, so.

BB: Okay.

RC: Yeah, yeah we just walk to here. Alvis stores, like you get through there and have the store like over here. (46.59)

BB: Okay.

RCJ: That store still there, isn't it?

BB: I believe so, yeah.

RCJ: Probably not Alvis now I don't guess, but yeah is it?

RC: I think he's son. One of Alvis' sons run that for a long time so-

BB: Okay. Gonna go by and take a look at it, you know.

RC: And see Bob the youngest, Alvis had 4 boys, and the youngest one Bob, he was a Supervisor for Prince William County.

BB: Mm-hmm

RC: And he had a, right up from the store there, he had an old antique place or it might still be there, I don't know.

RCJ: I don't think it's there anymore dad.

BB: So Catharpin, do you consider this farm part of Catharpin? Were you in Catharpin? Like, little community of Catharpin.

RC: Yep.

BB: So I know outside of Catharpin there was a black settlement called Settlement? There's a black section, was that still around when you're here?

RC: Not really.

BB: Not really? Okay.

RCJ: You told me that there was a black family, a couple, may have been a couple, but it was a house that sat right across from this entrance on the 623.

RC: Oh see. Well that's Catharpin road over there- (unintelligible) down here there was a black families right along here.

BB: Okay.

RCJ: Do you remember their name?

RC: Hey, yeah I, Miss Paige.

BB: Miss Paige? Okay, so they, I've been- there might be a connection to Bushey Park for them?

RC: Yeah.

BB: Okay-

RCJ: Possible.

BB: -yeah. How were your neighbors at Bushey Park?

RC: Well we had a, there's a dairy farm, right over here-

RCJ: On the other side of where Catharpin.

RC: On the other side of the road was uh. Oh I forget what his name is now. He had 4 daughters I remember them. (Laughs). Ruby.

BB: Okay.

RC: I can't come up with a name.

BB: Where were the neighbors all cordial? Did you have any issues with your neighbors?

RC: Well you didn't really. If you can work relations stuff, sometimes (unintelligible) swap work and different things, you know-

BB: Okay

RC: -but that's as far as, well back over this way is another farm over here we had done. Say I'm going to live on it, come out of the mountains the same time we did. Compton, Al Marine Compton. And we use associate with them you know how.

BB: Okay. Were there a decent amount of families up here from southwest Virginia?

RC: Quite a few.

BB: Quite a few? Okay. And it, did the southwest Virginia families kind of stayed together, or be a social circle?

RC: Yeah they had mostly-

BB: Okay.

RCJ: Stayed in touch with each other yeah. I know after you all come up here, a lot of their family flooded up here yes y'all kind of broke the ground come up here and see what it was all about he had cousins and uncles.

BB: Yeah.

RC: As a matter of fact when we had, we should build on a private housing project down there at 7:00 corners. And. We counted one time it's 35 guys working there from down home

BB: Oh wow. Did you go back down to southwest a lot living up here?

RC: Yeah I used to go back and, when we living on the farm here, I used to go back down there about every summer and spend a week or so.

BB: Okay. Did your, did your father do that too? Or did your siblings do that too?

RC: Well he used to go back once in a while, but he said to somebody if he spent one night he was ready to come back home.

RCJ: I see where that comes from. How many times did grandma and granddaddy move?

RC: 14 times.

BB: Wow.

RC: They lived all over Buchanan county.

BB: So it was, mainly the reason for them coming out of Buchanan was the uncle, and he left because of there was nothing to do but mining and other limited jobs down there?

RC: Well just sawmill and the mines.

BB: Sawmill and the mines? Okay.

RC: And that's one reason that, father he wanted to get us out before we went into the mines.

BB: Okay. Now when you came up to Prince William County did it seem like there's a different culture? Or is it just-

RC: Yeah.

BB: -part of Virginia?

RC: It different.

BB: It was different? How is it different?

RC: Well one thing, coal, or we called it (unintelligible). We'd go to the store to get coal over for the lengths, we'd call ask them for (unintelligible) they'd want to know what it's talking about.

RCJ: I know one thing that always amazed me, because I was born and raised in Manassas. What do you call this part of the country dad?

RC: East Virginia.

BB: East Virginia? I noticed that in some of the writings. Why are you calling East Virginia?

RC: But we come to East Virginia.

RCJ: Why do you call it that?

RC: I don't know, it's just the name, I guess just somebody said it and it just stuck.

RCJ: They always- when I was a kid I remember- and that's how people in Southwest Virginia, they still call it East Virginia-

BB: Mm-hmm.

RCJ: -there's no Northern Virginia, it's East Virginia. Anything east of the mountains.

BB: Okay.

RCJ: If you go to talk to the folks in Southwest Virginia, and if you was going to go on a trip to Norfolk, well you're going to East Virginia. If you're going on a trip to Fairfax, you going to East Virginia. It was anything east of the mountains basically, right?

RC: Right.

BB: Okay.

RC: Southern hillbillies come up here and were working, going down in Fairfax circle, they went around a long way.

BB: Can you think of any other differences between Southwest Virginia and Prince William during this time period?

RC: Well as I guess you could say that there's a world of difference.

BB: (Laughs). Okay.

RCJ: Well down there, really where dad was born and raised, when you say mountains, that is all it is, is mountains. It's up one mountain and down the other and. It's just hollows, it was big enough for a stream or a road. The creek and maybe a railroad track and a row houses, and then you had mountains going up. He'd never seen so much flat land probably when you come up here, did your dad?

RC: No.

BB: Now, would you consider Thoroughfare mountain a mountain?

RC: Of what?

BB: Thoroughfare mountain? Is that a mountain to you or is that a hill?

RC: Yeah. Pretty much so, yeah.

BB: Okay.

RCJ: Yeah, the height of the mountains down there is not that much drastically different from the northern valley or-

BB: I just know because that's the only mountain that we have anywhere around.

RCJ: Yeah, that's actually probably part of the south end of the Blue Ridge. Or our Bull Run mountain.

BB: Yeah a little bit, it's an outcrop of the Bull Run mountains.

RC: I see. Grande got flooded, that was the county seat up in Buchanan. It got flooded out so many times they moved the town across the river. Cut off it. How much you say they cut off that mountain?

RCJ: Hundreds of thousands of cubic yards of material-

RC: It was, a mountain come down on the other side on most of the river, and they cut the whole end off that mountain. That's where they moved the town through isn't it.

BB: Okay, wow.

RCJ: But after y'all came up here, several of Grandma's- Grandma and granddaddy 's brothers and sisters moved up this way or somewhere into East Virginia-

BB: Okay.

RCJ: -to get out of the mountains and follow them. Yep.

BB: All right.

RCJ: No I just said, after y'all come up here a lot of Grandma's and Granddaddy 's sister.

RC: Yeah I thought he was waiting on a question- wait, waiting on an answer-

BB: No. (Laughs).

RCJ: No but you throw it out there if you've got anything else-

RC: Well, we done told this man enough lies?

BB: Well thank you for-

RC: You didn't get that on the court date.