

Transcript of Interview with Mr. James (Jim) E. Payne Proffit, Virginia

Date: December 2, 2000
Interviewer: Mieka Brand

MB: So you belong to the Joker's Club?

JP: No they wouldn't let me join. They said someone had to die before I could join.

MB: For them too?

JP: Yeah. They had 30-something members at that time. See, our barbershop was named after the Joker's Club.

MB: Yeah

JP: I told you that, I think.

MB: Yeah, you told me the first time

JP: Yeah. But they wouldn't let nobody join. They had 30-something members. That was back in the '40s or '50s. Charlottesville is a small place, but they had— You know there were 30-something social clubs in Charlottesville?

MB: So everyone belonged to something

JP: Something, that's right. Even had some club called the Blue Mint.

MB: Blue Mints?

JP: Blue Mint, that's right... all kinds. I think my wife belonged to four of them. But I wasn't a member of the Joker's Club. They had 30-something members in it, though.

MB: Did you belong to any?

JP: Nothing but blue-cross insurance. That kills me. Blue cross—they cost 225 dollars a month.

MB: A month??

JP: A month. It went up last year: *two hundred* and twenty five dollars a month. I had to get social services—have to get some money back on my medicine.

MB: What do they pay for, everything?

JP: They don't pay for nothing but 80% hospital. Don't pay but 10% on medicine.

MB: and 220 dollars...

JP: 220 dollars a *month*.

MB: better off without it, huh.

JP: yeah... Of course I didn't pay them when I had both surgeries. But it kills you when you go for—

MB: they did 100% on that?

JP: they did. They did something supplemental, I think, something takes over the rest of it. Cause I didn't pay nothing on my surgery. And I had surgery in '96 and '97.

MB: On each knee.

JP: Yeah, both knees: One in '96, one in '97. Because you know, my neck—that's what hurts now. The doctor says he ain't got no extra necks. Can't do much with the neck business, I guess. It tightens up so that you can't turn your head, hardly.

MB: Maybe, could you use a different kind of pillow?

JP: I just rub some Wintergreen. Wintergreen alcohol. That helps temporarily.

MB: oh, does it?

JP: mm-hm. They got some of those things they recommend—don't do me no good, though. All the stuff, like the stuff here [shows MB a tube of Ben-Gay]. (?) they recommend it.

MB: oh yeah, Ben Gay, I used that.

JP: Helps only for about 15-20 minutes.

MB: Well, long enough to let you fall asleep.

JP: That's right. ... Some of the medicine I was taking, like Tylenol—650 milligrams, didn't do me no good. ... They got so much stuff that's so powerful.

...

MB: I was thinking, since I'll give you a copy of the tape, whatever you want to tell about your life ... that way it will be something your grandkids will appreciate

JP: Oh, yeah!

MB: And great grandkids

JP: That's right, got two of them too. I got two grandchildren and two great grandchildren. They might be here for Christmas, I hope.

MB: You must have more than two grandchildren, though

JP: Why?

MB: Because that's one, [refers to picture over TV] right? and Marcha has two kids

JP: She raises them. Those are adopted. But these are me [points to the woman in a picture over the TV]—that's *me*.

MB: Flesh and blood.

JP: Yeah. Ronnie is the only one of my children that had any children ... he had two children, a boy and a girl. [pause] And my brother had one child, he had a daughter.

MB: Which brother is that?

JP: (smiles) That's the one I didn't tell you about. My brother's daughter—I told you my brother died in '45. His daughter's name is Dire ['dye-ri']. She lives in Portsmouth. She's retired now... she's been a clerk for the coast guard for 30 years. She retired. Stayed on the boat, I think!

Dire—She was named after her grandma. ... Her mother's name is Eola, her grandmother's name Dire. She was a Thomas on her mother's side. My brother's name is Roscoe. We used to call him Tooky. [laughs] that was his nickname.

MB: [laughs] why was that?

JP: that was his nickname!

MB: Who made that one up?

JP: I don't know—probably all of us did.

MB: For any particular reason?

JP: Nope, not that I remember. That was a long time ago. He was two years and four months younger than me.

MB: Yeah.

JP: That's a long time ago.

MB: So, Dire Thomas, was she related to—there was a Thomas in Proffit, wasn't there?

JP: Oh, yeah! A whole lot of them. There was a whole nest of them down the railroad tracks! I remember one time they had nine children. I don't know how many boys and girls, but I know they had 9 children. That was down where the road goes under the railroad, like you're going down by the polo grounds. ... there was a farm back over there that way. Joining Bentivar Farm before they sold it. They got all houses down in Bentivar now. You say you've been down there. It's a subdivision now.

MB: Yeah, but you know, at the Proffit Association Picnic, the people who live in the old farmhouse [at Bentivar], they came to the picnic. The wife, I think she's British. They said they live on the original house of the farm.

JP: I know where that was. They had a well at that house—I told you Canadian people bought it, the Clarks?

MB: Yeah

JP: J.H. Clark. I went down there in '26. they had a hand-dug well on that place. 86 feet down deep and water had to be brought all the way up. You'd see vines and moss. And all that water... we had water on that thing... They'd let us down in order to clean it out. I'd be *scared* to go down with all that slick in there. Went on down in a bucket!

MB: That's how you'd go down?? You stand on a bucket?

JP: Yeah! A bucket and a rope.

MB: And they lower you down?

JP: Two men, one on each side of the well.

MB: Oh, boy. You gotta have a lot of faith.

JP: You *gotta* have faith. I don't go down there—I'd been to one well in my life. The guy was digging a well, I went down one time – just nosey. You know you can't breath [laughs] I don't like it down there. I couldn't take it.

MB: Who dug it?

JP: Somebody, honey. I don't know—that's all dug by hand back then, that one was probably done in slavery time, cause that was in '26 and they bought that farm. See, at the time I went down it, all that farm belonged to one man, that was Tony Clark. 700 acres. It was a 700-acre farm one time... Had Clydesdale horses, didn't have no tractors.

MB: Clydesdale? What kind are those?

JP: They're big horses, the kinds they have in Williamsburg, where you need a ladder to get on. Clydesdale and Belgian are the big horses—the largest horses that grow!

MB: What are they good for?

JP: Work horses. Both of them are large workhorses. Some of them—you need to get on them with a ladder, almost! Yeah, old Bentivar farm... that was in the day you were walking down Proffit road, and you didn't see no cars. Weren't no cars.

MB: It's a different time then.

JP: Yeah, horse and buggy, or *walk* where you're going. People walking down the road, they'd have a lantern, you know, one of those oil things. You ever seen a oil lantern?

MB: Well, I've *seen* some, but not being used.

JP: Oh yeah, hanging up somewhere on display. I've used many a-one. Used kerosene. Yeah, time marches on... funny thing is that I can remember stuff way back then, and I can't remember what happened last week! I was trying to think about that place—just about a half hour ago—where I worked at CC Camp. It took me a half hour to think of Halifax! I couldn't think of Halifax, couldn't get it to come... it was Halifax county, where we built the lookout tower for forest fires. I was scared the whole time I was on that thing.

MB: Why?

JP: I was 114 feet high, honey! I put all the steps in that tower. Had to dig the basement for the foundation! Its nine steps to a deck, it's 114 feet high—ain't nothing but a telephone and field glasses and the cot. Looking for forest fires. Right on a hill going to Halifax. I've got to find out what road that was, though. You know, in 1934 it was nothing but trees. I'd like to see what it looks like there right now. Heading on the way to South Boston, if you're going to North Carolina. I would like to see what it looks like. I'll get the map, cause I *know* it changed. All the places we used to go down there. And most of them in Mecklenburg County, and Halifax County. That was between (Keysville?) and South Boston... or between Farmville and South Boston. That's why I

say its too long, I don't remember! But I know things have changed since 1934. If I were to go down there now I'd get lost.

MB: There might still be some stuff over there.

JP: I'm going to get me a map—if I get me a map I *know* where to go. ... When I went down there, you didn't see no horses, people were plowing with oxen. Two steers. Didn't see no horses. You'd see persons plowing with an oxen, picking cotton... and tobacco. You could see that this side of Danville, though. That's the only place I've seen cotton grow in Virginia, before you get to Danville.

MB: I thought they grew a lot of cotton in Virginia.

JP: No, they grow *tobacco*, not cotton. In the Eastern Shore. A lot of tobacco's grown in Louisa county. Fluvanna county, tobacco. The only cotton I've seen was in Danville.

...

JP: Let me think of what I want... I have to think about where to start at. [After a long pause:] I can start at when I quit school, alright?

MB: Alright.

JP: That's 1926. The State didn't have no money for teaching for black children. So we walked 6 miles a day from Proffit to Pleasant Grove Elementary School. That's where the airport is now. That was torn down. That was a beautiful school, too. It had two rooms and three teachers, I believe. The teachers were Betty Minor and Rosa Lott. There's two more, I gotta get it straight—... Alice Carter and Reverend J. L. Carter. I think his first name was James, but I can't remember what his name was, I'll tell you that. But we walked six miles a day, so you put that down?

MB: Yeah—walked 6 miles a day.

JP: Six miles. Three up and three back. And the next thing, see, that was in '26. I went to work at Bentivar farm... let me see... I don't know how long I worked down there. That's when they built the rock store that they're tearing down now. OK, let me see... I gotta skip some parts because I don't remember. The next farm I worked on was called H. W. Greenhough. That was on [Route] 20. We worked there for a dollar a day and meals. We cut ice (?) off the ice pond by the Rivanna River. It was a pond right beside the river. Put in a 30 foot ice house at the house and hauled my mule-wagon to the house and put it in the ice house, which is 30 feet. Put it up in straw, covered the ice with straw.

MB: Covered it with straw. Why did you do that?

JP: Keep it for the summer.

MB: Oh, that's how you would keep it?

JP: Yeah, in the ground. You got straw by the freight loads – bales of straw. That's what kept the ice. Go down when it start to melt, you go down on the ladder. If you didn't take care you might fall and break your neck—when the ice melt, there'd be holes in it, see?

MB: Sure.

JP: It had a 30-foot ladder to go down there, though.

MB: What was the ladder made of?

JP: Wood. It was made of wood, they've metalized it now, but back on then they were made out of wooden rounds. And that was farm work: cutting hay and hauling hay. Cutting and hauling hay... and corn. [phone rings, JP answers, discussion] Cutting corn on the river... I think [one time] from 1 o'clock in the evening to 6 o'clock I've killed as many as four moccasins—Snakes!—With a corn knife. They go into the river looking for water! See, the corn field's right beside the cliff, the cliff was right by the river. Them snakes come down the cliff wanting nothing

but water. Every time I see one its going into the water. (Just gotta mow them on down?). Well (I (?) as long as I got the) corn made. I could take care in order to (?). Just don't *step* on one of them, you know. They're poison. Black snakes are nothing but garden snakes. Moccasins are poisonous.

MB: Black Snakes aren't poisonous?

JP: Not unless they're crossed up with something. Never heard of a black snake being poisonous. Moccasins are poison, Gardens is poison, and the black diamond we have here in the back of the mountain—we got the black diamond in the Blue Ridge. 'Course he would always let you know—he gives you a warning: t-t-t-t [makes the sound of a rattle snake and shakes his hand like the tail of a snake]. He lets you know when he's going to hang you...

MB: Oh, so it's a rattle snake?

JP: Yeah – rattle snakes in the mountains of the Blue Ridge! Up at Shenandoah valley lake, up on the mountains. Up around White Hall and Brown's Cove, too!

...

JP: Uh, let's see. Yeah, we built rail fences, too at H. W. Greenhough. Of course, I know you don't know what a rail fence *is*.

[MB laughs]

JP: I saw your face. What do you think is a rail fence?

MB: What is a rail fence?

JP: They were made out of chestnut oak, honey. They don't chip at their old age, no notches, no nothing. Chestnut oak do not have knots. Its easy to split, and it don't leave messes. You just split it, and then you put it in... [demonstrates with a pencil] you put the pencil like that. [JP holds his fingers up in an X] and you put the rail right down the middle. No nails or nothing. You see like this [show with his fingers again]. Two poles. See, they're two poles in an X. Two more poles is down about eight feet. Then the rail goes in the middle of them.

MB: I see, so no nails.

JP: No nails, no.... don't need no nails. That was a long time ago. I (drove rails?) in '31. Yeah, that's what they used to have all around here—didn't have nothing but rail fences. They used dogwood, or some of them used hickory—different things. But see, the reason they used chestnut oak is because it didn't have no knots in it. It split easy. You can't split wood that's got knots in it. It chips off any old kind of way. You take a gum tree, a dogwood tree, a sycamore tree—you can't split them. The grain's crossed. All of those trees, it just chips off. You can't split it. Take a split with a wedge and a hammer, it'll just chip off in little pieces. But (a lot of different types of wood have a grain, you just go on down the (?) and split it. It's hard to split pine, because pine chips off, too. But the problem with pine is that it's an easy thing to rot. Decays so quick. I remember when my daughter got that place—when mama and I gave her that place—when we got married, we had but two acres. The pines were so thick in there... look at my hand. [JP holds both hands together with the back of one facing me. His fingers are interlocked]. You couldn't walk in there. Pines. Her husband and I worked on that place every Wednesday for one month. With a chainsaw. Cut those pine trees until we could walk through there.

MB: What did you do with all the wood?

JP: Divided it up! They weren't too large... some of them weren't no bigger than (?). I was doing the sawing, my son-in-law was doing the dragging. He was the pack-mule. He dragged it down hill and burned the stuff up. Cleared up a whole lot—enough to build a house! [pause] ... Mama had just got that land, too.

MB: Where did she get it from?

JP: From my... um... let me so, how do I put that? My uncle's son. They had 10 acres. He sold it all, but Marcha and Eddie got the first two acres. ... It was 8 or 10 acres. There's four houses on it now. Each house about 2 acres.

MB: What was your wife's name?

JP: Catherine.

MB: Oh, so Marcha is your daughter?

JP: Yeah. Catherine Elizabeth and Marcha Elizabeth.

MB: They have the same middle name.

JP: A-ha.

...

JP: Now, Ms. Leake's mother, Ms. Cox – she's the one that ran the store. They had a boardwalk down there where the little house is now, back in the field almost to the river, by the railroad.

That's where the big store was. Get gingersnaps 5 for a penny. So hard you'd take a hammer to break them. [laughs]. You used to get them in a keg, like a 20-gallon keg or something. A barrel, that's what they used to call them. Sugar, 2 cents a pound.

MB: When was that?

JP: That was in the '20s. [smiles] That's the day before yesterday, isn't it?

MB: Something like that [laughs].

JP: And down in the bottom—where Ms. Tinsley lives—that was C. D. Lewis's store. The building is still there now.

MB: When was that?

JP: That was in the '20s, too.

MB: So there were two stores at the same time.

JP: Oh, yeah. And the railroad station. The railroad station was far from the house—the one I'm talking about now. The station was torn down, but the house is still there. It was two rooms for passengers, a baggage room, and an operator's room—Morse code. Five trains a day. I think, 3 going south and two going north. 17¢ fare to Charlottesville. Double track then, though. Ain't but one track down there now. Sidetrack there, we used to work on Saturday loading with pulpwood and stuff in it. People go into the mountains, bring pulpwood—you know, to make paper out of. Down there working all Saturday trying to make a couple of quarters.

MB: A couple of *quarters*?

JP: [laughs] Trying to make a couple of quarters. You didn't get nothing but for working! [pause] I told you I worked in 1932 for 25¢ an hour running an air drill.

MB: No, you didn't tell me that!

JP: I didn't tell you?? Yeah. 25¢ an hour running an air drill on [Route] 29. That's when they built the first lane—the southbound lane. I ran a jackhammer up there. And you know, when it stops shaking—you know, its kind of hard to ease the shaking [demonstrates how his whole body shook]. You ever seen one?

MB: Yeah, sure I've seen one.

JP: That's what I used to run. Its run by air. That's why it shakes you so. And on 29, when I was working up there, we had to count the dynamite go off.

MB: You had to what?

JP: Count the shots go off—using dynamite. In CC Camp I used to do the same thing. We had batteries, you didn't have to run. Count it till it go off... two, three people lighting the dynamite;

you put a two-foot fuse on it, it burns a foot to the minute. There's about two, three people lighting them. You give yourself time to get away from it. Get away about 150 feet from it.

MB: Wow.

JP: Dynamite shoots down. But it will come up sometimes.

MB: So you just light it up and run as fast as you can?

JP: That's right. There are a lot of fuses. You're supposed to give yourself time. I remember that old thing—about two or three minutes. I think it burns a minute to the foot, that's for the fuse. See, the cap in the dynamite puts it off.

MB: The what?

JP: The cap in the dynamite... I can't describe to you to see how it works. Say you got a stick of dynamite that's about... 12-14 inches long. Its soft powder, but its wrapped in paper.

MB: Yeah...

JP: The cap is about that long [demonstrates about one inch]. The cap goes inside the dynamite. The *fuse* goes inside the cap, and that's what you light—the fuse.

MB: Right.

JP: You got 40% dynamite, 60%, or 80%. ... If it's a big job, say a mountain, they'd use kegs of powder. Blow a whole mountain down. But its all done by battery—about 500 feet away. They don't take no chance on...

MB: That's what they did at CC Camp?

JP: We had batteries, yeah. Didn't have to worry about not going off. Cause each cap was tested by a tester. Didn't take no chances on blowing somebody up.

MB: I'm sure there *were* accidents, though.

JP: Oh yeah! I imagine there was! As far as I know where I worked it didn't, but its lucky it didn't.

MB: You mean on 29.

JP: Yeah

MB: What about CC Camp?

JP: Nope. Not that I know of. I went to CC Camp after I left my work on 29. In '32 I was [working on] 29, and I went to CC Camp in '33. I went to CC Camp from October in '33 to January in '35. Stayed there 15 months.

MB: How long did you work on [Route] 29 North?

JP: I don't remember *how* long it was. I just worked on the bridge mostly. I was drilling the bridge. Bridge Force.

MB: The bridge over Rivanna?

JP: North Rivanna, yeah. That was down in the ground, drilling a hole for dynamite—before they put the bridge on.

MB: But *you* didn't do the dynamite yourself, did you?

JP: Not at that particular place, but I have did it. You see, I worked on the bridge down in the ground, and on the outside (the distance?) not far. I was working for the bridge people. ...

Dynamite is something dangerous, though. The way that guy used to drive that truck, oh, I was scared they were going to blow away that driver (he was so?) crazy. This is in CC Camp.

Carrying all that dynamite—honey, we'd drive a pickup truck – he's driving that thing, jumping all over the place. I said, 'man that thing might go off!'. And he, 'man, it ain't gonna hurt you.' I don't know what's gone in him.

MB: Who said that?

JP: The guy who was driving the truck. Him and I were carrying the dynamite going to work. That was in CC Camp.

MB: Was that a friend of yours?

JP: No, no—there were 240 of us in CC Camp. 240 people. 40 people were local, from around Farmville and Drake's Branch and Charlotte (Corridor?) and (Cambridge?) and all them places round there. It was local people. Had nine squads; I believe about 20-something people to a squad. Everybody did different works. Some set up trees, some blew up trees and blast trees, some built roads... but we were under army supervision, though. We had a gray and green uniform. We were under army regulations. Had bugles, (?), and all that stuff: bunk beds, army mess kits—those aluminum things [pause] I'm going to tell you the name of the camp, too: Camp Gallion. 1390. Camp Gallion, Green Bay, Virginia. That's where it was. I'll never forget that. They had one in Scottsville, too, I believe. They had several CC Camps in different counties.

...

JP: My hearing got mighty bad in the past year or so. I got my ears cleaned up last Tuesday.

MB: Did it help?

JP: Helped some. It don't help with them soft voices [in church]—I don't get the words! And that really hurts when you go to church meetings. You don't want to miss that, you want to hear every word of that (?) Because somebody might break bad! [laughs] We get along pretty good now, though. There's too many hard heads. You gotta agree with somebody. You can't have your way all the time. Well, I've been to church meetings [where I got] so mad I could blow it up. I made sure I didn't open my mouth. I swallowed my pride... You ain't never going to get everything you like.

MB: yeah, sure.

JP: Some people think that! People hollering in church, going: 'where's my seat?' 'where's my seat?'. You ain't *got* no seat in church—wherever you find! My wife and all of them bought pews in the church 40 years ago. I don't look for my pew to sit in! I remember when mama and I bought them – all of the members bought them.

MB: What do you mean 'bought them'? People pay for them?

JP: Yeah. You bought them and put your name on them—a little plate just goes on the back of them.

MB: So do they do that now?

JP: No, not necessarily. I think we *had* to do it. I think. I don't remember—been so long. That was 20 years ago. Lord, mama's [JP's wife] been dead... Mama died in '86. That was long before she died. I don't remember *why* we bought them, now. I wouldn't say we *had* to do it. But we got it so that most of our old members are dead. We don't have many old members. I told you I was the oldest member of the church!

MB: yeah.

JP: I'm the oldest member of that church. But we got a lot of young people in that church.

MB: Is that good or bad?

JP: Its good. They *need* to be in church. Better to be in church then to be in jail. We got a young pastor, that's what did it, see?

...

JP: No, we old people have the trouble because we're not that patient with all them children. The little children Marcha keeps—last Sunday they ushered: one on each door.

MB: Oh, that's nice!

JP: Well, Chris [Marcha's son] plays drums! Yeah, he plays drums sometimes with the band. They're good. They do good things, but just... I don't know. Marcha gives them too much reign. Too much freedom. Say, like now—if you and I went up there and we'd be sitting there talking, they'd come in and *they'd* take over. See, I can't stand that stuff. Marcha let them get by with it. I wouldn't. I would have started a long time ago. ... I know the other day Eddie say something to one of the little boys at the table—I was over at the thanksgiving dinner—and he had to come back with a remark, I couldn't take it. One of mine come back with a remark, I'd be on that side of the table with him [laughs]. I'd say, 'that's all. That's it *now*.' End of the conversation! He wouldn't make no remark on what *I* said. They shut up. ...But I know what would have happen if you'd say something to mama! [laughs] she'd be up on the table, I expect! Boy, my wife was *rough* [laughing]. Her grandmother raised her. She didn't play. But mama was as tough as she was! No, Catherine didn't play. Because grandma Emma raised *her*. [laughs] Take something upside your head in a *minute*! You know that *now* you'd be in jail. You know, something good about mama, she'd say: if those children did something while I was at work—before mama went to work—she'd tell me when I got home... if she hadn't already beat them. Yeah, she didn't play. ... Old Ronnie, I remember one time, set the field on fire—had the *whole* field burning!

MB: Ronnie did??

JP: Yeah, smoking! (Cut to?) that broomsage (?).

MB: the whole field went on fire?

JP: (?) That was the second time. It did it to me one time! I went down there back there to—getting water to where they wash the clothes—to get water from the spring and burned up all that broomsage. You know how broomsage is, it dries out and there's a danger of setting on fire. Well, I went down and was going to burn up all around the spring to the get the water away from it. A man comes down here from the fire department says, 'if you don't put that fire out you're gonna *pay* for it!' Burned over half of my place! See, its supposed to burn a certain time of year, and a certain time of day: after 4 and before 12 at night. But what happened: the minute I lit that match down at the spring, the *wind* rose. That was it! Couldn't stop it. The only way I stopped that fire was to put a fire in front of it. Back fire. I learned that in CC Camp. Fire burned away down there everywhere, burning acres and acres of land. They gonna put a fire in front of it and then put that fire out, and let the one burn up to it. That will cut it off. ... We fought a fire in CC Camp for ten days one time. All the way down in Drake's Branch in Charlotte (Corridor?). We fought fire by air, by water tanks on your backs, and rigs. They use a tank of water on your back and sprayed the tree stumps. A tree stump like that would burn for months and days and days. See, its burning underground, but there's a danger of sparks flying out. Yeah, we fought fire for ten days, honey.

...

MB: So you would just go all over?

JP: Yeah! You had certain camps.

MB: So everything in that area was in your charge.

JP: That's right. It was 1390. We had a camp set up from all the way back in Green Bay back in Buckingham. Probably about 20 or 30 miles apart, 40 miles apart. But we had a lot of different counties. CC out to Albemarle county and moved to White Hall and built that lake up there!

They came to White Hall in... in the '40s, I believe. Built up a lake right at White Hall. They use it for fishing now. I don't think its was (posted?) any more.

MB: What did they build it for?

JP: I think it was fishing.

MB: That's what they built it for?

JP: No, they didn't build it for that. They built it for... I think they built it for recreation. But I don't think they use it for that now. I don't hear anybody say anything about that. And also, there's another place by White Hall, too—there's some resort out there. They got white sand up in the mountain... I can't think of that place to save my life. Its between White Hall and Brown's Cove... they got cottages and everything up there... Can't think of the name of the place now... its right off of [Route] 810. 810 goes along from [Route] 250 on across to 29 up at the foot of the mountain. Doylesville, or... no, it wasn't Doylesville. I know they got summer cottages and they have white sand back in the mountain. I think they had riding horses over there, too, one time. That was a good while ago. They might not have it now. It was a summer resort.

...

JP: Where was I now?

MB: Let's see, we were talking a while back when you were working on the farm down on 20.

JP: Down at Ms. Greenhough's.

MB: Yeah.

JP: That's who owned it. Walter Kimball was the foreman down there. He lived there. She stayed overseas most of the time. Ms. Greenhough's husband was dead. She was lonely. I don't know she was (lazy?) or *what* she was. But she'd go over in September and stay all the winter.

MB: To where?

JP: To go to England, France, somewhere. Leave all that house to us. All that work. She had land on both sides of the river. I don't know how much land *she* had. But she didn't do nothing but... She bred Black Angus cattle. I think Ms. Greenhough had... Heck, she had *three* barns, I believe. Where I used to go to the barn to feed, it was so cold I'd rather walk the horse and lead him. I wouldn't even ride the horse then. Its too *cold!*

MB: Lead him?

JP: Too cold to ride a horse then, honey!

MB: Because of the wind?

JP: Yeah, its cold! I'd walk and lead the horse to keep warm!

MB: Must have been pretty cold.

JP: It *was* cold! Any time its cold enough to cut ice off the river, you know its cold. Around zero [degrees] all day. Get up to maybe 10 above, something like that. We'd haul ice from that ice pond and carry it up to the hill, to the ice house at the hill and you could see a drop of water in the wagon body. There's no ice melting. It was that cold! We walked. We didn't ride no wagon [laughs] its about a block of ice around you. Too cold to ride a wagon. Walk *beside* the wagon's drive. ... [laughing] Yeah, people say 'them the good old days'—I don't want to see them no more! 'The good old days'...

MB: You don't?

JP: Nope! Hard times. I don't want to see them *no more*.

...

JP: Let's see, 1940... see that tree by the fence right there? Go on down the driveway.

MB: Yeah

JP: I saw snow up that high. Drift. In '48.

MB: Snow up to the top of the fence?

JP: That's right.

MB: So what's that about... four feet?

JP: That's right. That snow drifts like that [indexes a slope with his hand]

MB: Wow...

JP: Yeah, honey. I've *seen* it. I've seen a snow plow come here, a truck, and the snow's so deep in the road he couldn't budge it. He went back and got an old machine and leaned it on the side—run about 5 miles an hour. That moved it, though. Yeah, snow drifted deeper than that field right there. 1948 is that last big one I remember. People's water and things freezing up in the house, now. Sure, if it stays cold that long—at least two weeks—everything in the house freezes up. I killed a hog back in them days and we killed a hog and hang him up to stiffen him up to cut him up the next day. Hog almost froze. Too cold to cut out. You can get them chitlins and cut them out, but it gets so hard you can't. Your hand will be aching, trying to cut the hogs up. Ice killed four-five hogs every year.

MB: What'd you do with them?

JP: Sell them.

MB: You didn't eat them?

JP: How can you eat that much meat, honey?

MB: How big are the hogs?

JP: Oh, about 200 [pounds] on up—each. Or more...

MB: So how much meat do you get out of a 200 pound hog?

JP: You get all of it, as soon as you're finished cutting it up. You cut it out and then you trim it up. You trim the ham, you trim the shoulders up, you put it down in salt for six weeks and draw all the blood out of it. So when you take it out and hang it up its cured. Then you got to wash it... you don't want no skippers or something to get in there.

MB: Skippers?

JP: Yeah, bugs will get in it if you don't put it in a bag or something. Like, if you got it hanging up and you don't put in a bag or something, the skippers will get in it. ... Yeah, you put that meat for six weeks. That way people always raising so much saying about 'sugar cured ham' and 'country ham'. You salt them, that's the way you cook them. That meat stays in salt *six weeks!* Then you take it out and grease them. You need to brush the salt off before you cook it. That's why you need to soak it so much. But if they don't soak it enough, that's why its salty. You're supposed to boil it in water before you cook it. Then put it in another water. Boil it in two different waters.

MB: Why you do that?

JP: To get the salt out, honey! Its still going to be salty. I told you it stays in salt six weeks. I've been searching to get some country ham so salty it'll lock your jaws.

...

MB: So when did you have hogs?

JP: Oh Lord, I haven't raised hogs since mama had taken sick. After mama had taken sick I stopped raising the hogs. Then it got to a part that it gotten so (stricken?) and the feed was so high... See, when I was raising a lot of hogs, I'd work at the shop all the time, but I would pick up

garbage at the Midway School and at the Venable School up on 14th street to feed the hogs. But after the hog feed got up so high, got to a point I couldn't make nothing. Then I carried the medicine to get them killed, and they got so stricken by the medicine, it was skinning the hogs.

...

JP: I stopped doing it after mama had taken sick. I carried her to the hospital. She was on a kidney machine for two years before she died. Dialysis three times a week. She didn't drive around, I carried her myself. ... She worked at night anyway. Yeah, I used to carry her around all the time. She didn't drive. I carried her when she was working! Worked at night 25 years.

MB: At the hospital, right?

JP: I told you her and Ms. Tinsley work together? South Three / North Three [floor at UVA hospital]

MB: Which one was south, which one was north?

JP: My wife on South Three. Ms. Tinsley on North Three.

MB: What department... what ward was that?

JP: I don't know *what*... I think mama worked in... the department where you change your skin? Change your face or something, I don't know what department. I know one was South Three, one was North Three. Both of them were LPN—Licensed Practical Nurse.

MB: Did they go to school for that?

JP: Yeah, they went to school in town. They were at Piedmont College. But there were two ladies around here teaching it, too. One was a Ms. Johnson, she taught nursing. And another lady taught mama, too. They were licensed. Taught at their home. One taught mama, one taught Mary Pattie [Tinsley]. I don't know if Mary Pattie went to Piedmont or not, but I know these women were old nurses, they taught at their home. They'd teach nursing at the Vo-Tech on Rio Road, too, I think. I know they'd teach barbering in there. I imagine they're teaching nursing there. I know Piedmont [PVCC] does.

MB: And that's where your wife went.

JP: I can't tell you. She went to where the woman taught at her home. I can't think of her name now, but she was an old nurse. She was from Piedmont, though.

MB: She lived in Proffit?

JP: No, I don't know where she lived at. But Ms. Johnson—her husband taught at Burley school. He taught Masonry. William Johnson.

...

[Marcha Howard arrives, introductions, hands medicine to JP]

JP: Thank you, babe! I thought I told you to bring me some bourbon!

MH: you said you had a headache. I brought you Ibuprofen.

JP: I sure would like to have a chug of bourbon!

[laughter]

JP: Thank you, babe!

MH: Your welcome. That one won't be so bad on your stomach.

JP: What.

MH: you should take a couple of those.

JP: Bourbon ain't bad on my stomach either!

MH: I know, daddy, but—

JP: But I gotta (?)

MH: —You said you had the headache

JP: I didn't say I was gonna keep the headache, honey!

MH: alright...

[MH & MB talk about project]

JP: I told her a while ago I could remember something that happened 30-40 years ago better than I can remember what happened last week!

MH: well that's

MB: yeah.

JP: I remember in 1935 I got my first car. Got out of CC Camp, bought me an Oldsmobile Blue. Could see it all the way to Crozet. Got right down the road and couldn't get to the house. The ruts were that deep. Couldn't get it to the house! The road ain't nothing but a gutter down there! 1935. Driver's license wasn't but 50 cents. 50 cents drive it where you want.

MH: Just a few years ago...

...

[Marcha leaves]

JP: That's my baby, there.

MB: She's your youngest one?

JP: No, she's the middle child. She's 53. Jimmy's 55 and Ronnie's 51.

...

JP: Marcha calls me every day. And the boy I raised live up the hill, John Howard – John Jackson. He lives in the white bungalow up there. He built it.

MB: That's not a bungalow, that's a *big* house.

JP: It's a bungalow—its only one floor.

...

JP: [John Howard Jackson]'s been here ever since he was 8 years old, he almost 50 now.

MB: Where'd he come from?

JP: His mother lived in town, mother was giving her children away. A whole lot of children. His mother died last year, I think. Had a whole lot of children up in Pittsburgh, he hadn't even known hardly. Its one of them unfortunate things. His sister died last winter. [shows a picture of sister and her children]. She died last December, I think it was. We raised her, too. ... Two of the kids at church last Sunday. They live in town on Penn Park Lane, right down Rio Road. Everybody knows them and is nice to them. The reverend knows them and likes them... she didn't stay with us normally, but ... John Howard Jackson. I call him John-boy. [laughs]. He's the only one stayed. The rest of them stayed a while. A whole lot had been here, but they didn't stay long. He didn't have a lot of places for him to go. Some of them stayed just about two-three weeks before they get transferred somewhere else. ... You know, in the length of 25 or 30 years, I guess we had 25 or 30 children. We had 6 at one time: four boys and two girls. You couldn't do it now (?). ... I had trouble with one of the guys getting up on Sunday morning. He wouldn't get up on Sunday morning. You know what I did?

MB: What.

JP: Turned the bed over.

MB: No!

JP: Like heck, I didn't! This is in the basement. See all the boys in the basement. Turned the bed over and he got up. Everybody was going to church but him.

MB: So the boys were down in the basement including yours?

[JP nods]

MB: And then the girls were where?

JP: Up here. Only 2 girls. She got 3 bedrooms up here. And we made 3 downstairs. Ain't nobody down there now. Nobody here but me. so what do you do with a big house when you get old? [laughs] I can't clean it. You see, all the children got old, they got their own work to do. They're working. I'm not working. I ain't worked for at least six-seven years. I worked at the Joker's Barbershop for fifty-something years. From 1938 to about six-seven years ago.

MB: That's about 50 years.

JP: Did I tell you at the barbershop a haircut was 35 cents? Haircut was 35 cents and shave 15 cents. I thought I told you that.

MB: Yeah, you did. You told me last time. When was that?

JP: 1938. Its been six years now. Ain't but two there now. Ain't but one boy working part time. One works regular [full time], two work part time. Ronnie works there sometimes on weekends. He works at Hampton Inn most of the time. And the other boy who works there is sick. He's been on a dialysis machine for the past year. Massie boy, he used to work there.

...

JP: You learn a lot about cutting people when you (?) like that. ... Its amazing when you cut a dead person, though. When you shave people with razors – and you go down there and cut a person and their skin all of this *white* – ain't no blood down there!

MB: a dead person

JP: all the blood's gone!

MB: Oh, you used to...

JP: Shave them!

MB: Dead people?

JP: Yeah!

MB: At a funeral home?

JP: Sure, I used to work at funerals all the time. Whenever they called me. Most requests from people I used to be cutting their hair for 25-30 years. Like Dr. Jackson and all them guys up there request you to go to funeral parlor (?). I worked at a funeral parlor one day, and the guy—one of the boys—told me, said, 'go on down in the lab.' I went down in the lab with four bodies down there. I had to get down on my knees to cut the person's hair. All four of them down there—and me. He came down and left me down there with them people [laughs]. You know, it never bothered me much until you get somebody you know. That's when it gets to you. It makes you *think* when you get somebody you know, though. Now the good thing about shaving dead people is you use electric razors don't have to worry about cutting them. Of course, you know, they drain all the blood out when they put the fluid in. That pushes the blood out. You don't have to worry about cutting the face, though. Not if you're using electric razors. We had straight razors when I went to work. They didn't have no electric razors.

MB: yeah.

JP: So what you're gonna ask me now?

MB: Well, I was gonna ask how you're doing.

JP: I feel alright so far. You tired? You getting stiff.

MB: I guess. We could go on, though, if you want.

JP: I can't think of any more right now.