

Unified Committee for Afro-American Contributions
Oral History Documentation Project

HARRY LINWOOD REED

Interviewed by Dorothy Waters
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[Begin Side 1, Tape 1 of 2]

DW: ...2001 and I am doing an interview with Mr. Harry Reed, and we will start out with asking him: Where did you live? And, describe the location and reference points, anything that was around the area where you lived.

HR: I was born 1907 at -- an Indian name, Zacata, Virginia which is located at the Montross district, Westmoreland County, Virginia. I went to school, local schools there. I think at that time, they only went to the 7th Grade, then I was sent to what you would call now high school, which was at the Northern Neck in Industrial Academy. I believe it was 1924 or 5 until 27, and my father had three of us in boarding school. So, he -- times were a little tight then and I -- he had to take some them out. One or two of them out, so I was one of them that they took out. Of course, he always took the smartest one out, and from there, I started working in Washington. My first job was in, at the Wardman Park Hotel, 1928.

Do I keep on going?

DW: You can keep on going.

HR: 1928. I worked there until '31. The Shoreham Hotel was built in 1931. Yeah, 1931, and I worked there until I was -- They took me in the Army in... '41? [pause] '43? I went in the Army in 1943 and served overseas. At that time, they call them "longshoreman" because I was a little too old for what I really wanted was the Marines or Navy. But I was too old for either one of those, so I had to go into the labor force, what they call longshoremen: loading and unloading ships. And on June the 9th, we landed in Omaha Beach. The Invasion -- We were only a few days behind the Alliance and serve there until, I think, '45. Yeah, 1945.

Now, you want to cut it off for a while?

We were six days, no seven, eight days after the Invasion. We landed in Normandy in France. And when we -- The place where we--Omaha Beach is a terrible place, up on a high hill and we went over from South Hampton in Normandy and we had to -- We were on a large ship. We had to get off the ship and get on a barge, and this barge would only take us halfway. Then, the bottom -- the water was so shallow there, we had to get off and swim the rest of the way with our full equipment--rifle, duffle bag, all our equipment to shore.

When we got to shore, there's a place they call Boot Hill. Boot Hill was, I'd say, about maybe couple, I'll say 150 feet tall, and they had been -- The Germans were at the place, just lined up with anti aircraft guns and machine guns, pill boxes and mines, and they had killed, I guess -- I'm sure it was at least seven or 800 guys going up that hill. And when we landed and got straightened out a little bit, we happened to look over to the right and

they had a big ditch there and they were bringing bodies in on the trailer loads, just dumping in this big ditch. And I often wonder when they say, "Bring my son's body home," how they could do that.

So, we made very slow progress. We had to keep the front line with plenty ammunition and poor ole Pat really he had them shooting up some, too. St. Lo, Pat told them at get rid of all the snipers. If you get rid of -- if any of my men get shot, we're going come back and blow the whole town up, and that's just what he did. And, that was the worst place you've ever seen to go through: St. Lo. All those bodies and so on, their houses all -- He threw a bomb -- a hand grenade in each house, blocks and blocks away. From there, we went to a place you call St. Bass -- St. Bass Ranch and there were loaded ships there and worked around until they got a good hope. We couldn't hear the big guns anymore. And then, we got a foot hold there. The trucks would haul the ammunition to the front. So there, we had more soldiers coming over and they gave us the job of taking care of the camps where the soldiers were coming in -- because just from the States and hadn't been in a battle, why they were really scary, and they had to put their soldiers -- not soldiers, the what-you-call-them? Well anyway, we had to -- During the guard duty, we had to walk -- Their soldiers had to walk with us to patrol the camps. Some of them were named after cigarettes: Lucky Strike, Camel, Chesterfield and so on like that, and that we worked in that until they were almost up to Paris. And from Paris, we went to Rhemes where they made the wine. And, we could have stayed there for the rest of the year been alright. That's the best wine I've ever tasted! [laughter] Well, that's enough of. We came home in '45 and went to work at the REA: Rural Electric Administration. Went back to work -- I had worked there before. We worked there until it turned -- the

Department of Agriculture took that over. And, well, the REA: Rural Electric Administration -- was a regular company that would take, while the -- or give the country people all the places where the electric companies thought it would be took expensive to run the lines, so they would run the lines and eventually the country people would have electricity. [Laughter] [pause] [laughter]

DW: Well, what was your next job after that? Or, how long did you work there?

HR: Yeah, I retired in 1968. '68, and my job there was Information Clerk, and we -- the four of us there, we had been there long enough, the four of us had a hundred years service and our job was to know each department and what they did, their functions and so on. And, taking information from -- Well, we talked to people from all over the world, give them what --Whatever they want, we were supposed to give them. If it was something we didn't handle, if it was the Commerce Department, Interior. We knew just who over there would be able to handle such information. Very interesting.

And after that, after I retired, I came down here at Longview Beach, opened the old place up. How shall I say now? What do we do there? [Laughter] It was very nice. Wonderful place, beautiful. We had slot machines and served good seafood, right on the water, bathing and so on. Let's see -- We better catch up again.

DW: Okay, Mr. Reed. You have already mentioned where you went to school. How did you get to school and what type of materials did you have? And, who was your favorite teacher? And, give us some information on that.

HR: The school's located about 2 miles from my home, and most of the time we'd walk to school. And, we had several neighbors around and it was a pleasure getting together with this crowd in the morning and afternoon and going to and from school. And there, we

had -- The school was a two-room, two-room school and our teacher was from Washington--I believe his name was Dr. Seabrie--and his wife, and they mostly likely, they finished the 7th Grade. They weren't very good. But later on, we got rid of them and got another one from Howard University. He was very good. His name was Edelen: William B. Edelen, and he was a military man. That is the, what you call it, ROTC. And, he taught us quite a bit about marching and the different games and so on, and my favorite was baseball. I used to try to pitch, and I think we play in the neighbor's next town. We had such a tight game until we stopped counting the runs. They got so many runs, we stopped counting! [Laughter] So, I gave up pitching. Then, we started a little basketball and it looks like everything just wouldn't work out just right with us. So, as far as I'm concerned, our field wasn't very good. It was on the hillside and if you hit the ball only a certain distance, why, you'd always make a home run because it rolled back the rest of the way! [Laughter]

We had, at that time, we'd take our lunch, had lunch baskets. It was Karo syrup cans which were what we took our lunch to school in. We had a place to keep them until lunchtime. And, we used to have a pads -- paper pads to write on and they were the old, rough paper, like -- something like these brown bags that you use in the store, they used to use in the store. And, we also had slates. A slate --a slate is a little -- It's a stone about, well, this was about I'd say 8x8 and you had a crayon, white crayon and you'd do your writing, your adding and so on the slate. And then, you had a little brush to brush it off. And after you use it for quite awhile, you'd have to wash it. It'd get real smutty. [Laughter] Then we worked up from there to notebooks, and oh boy! We were really coming fast then! Notebooks. And from that, we, after I left the graded -- They call it

Graded School -- and went to the Academy, why, everything changed. We had different books, working material and desks. And at the old school, we had a double desk: two sit at a desk side by side. And, how many times we would get in trouble with the guy in front of us! We had ink pens and a well. We call it ink well in the desk and a pen. Well, it's something like a feather.

DW: A quill?

HR: And it was a lot of fun just to catch the guy and get that fella and tickle his ears or stick the pen to his neck and all kinds of crazy things. We had a lot of fun. It was very nice. So then, we had to go--We found out this teacher didn't know what the heck all was about, so we had to go five miles to another place called Montross, Virginia to a school there. And, our transportation was a horse and a buggy. We had a little disk plate on a place you call Mill Hill, and we go in a little shed there, tied the horse there and take the feed up there and feed him. And, the teacher used to ride with us. He lived about 2 miles from the school and we were about 5 miles and go in the morning early and come back late in the evening because it was always somebody have to stay in, so we have to wait for the teacher. [Laughter] What a day. What a day.

DW: Now, were you ever one of those that had to stay in?

HR: Many times! [Laughter] I was a fighter, too, but I never won a fight. I always had trouble with my nose. All they had to do was tap me on my nose and my nose started shooting blood, bleeding. There goes my fight. Lost a battle again. [Chuckle]

DW: On an average, how many students were there?

HR: I'd say about, the two-room school, I'd say around 40. 40, around 40 or 50 to the most.

DW: Now, did you go to school the same terms like they do now? Was it year-round? Did

you go during non-harvest season? Did you have to worry about things like that with the farming?

HR: Yeah, we had to. We were the last to go, always a month later than the whites, and we had to come out a month earlier to work in our gardens. My dad, we raised, our cash crop was tomatoes and we had -- Sometimes we put in 5 to 10 acres and you'd pick them. You had to pick them and take them to the factory, and they had factories every 5 miles. See at that time, no trucks, just ox carts and the wagons and horses. So, we had a processing plant and women use to go there and peel the tomatoes and can them right there, cook them. And, most of them was on -- The factories, most of them were on, near the water. So, they used to bring the cans and well, all the freight by boat, in by boat. Then steamboats, we had, by where I was, is a peninsula: Potomac River on one side and Rappahannock on the other. So, there was no railroad. We were about 52 miles from the nearest railroad. They wouldn't bring a line through there because of boats, traffic, and the freight.

DW: So tomatoes. So you -- Was that the, that was their main cash crop. What else did they do?

HR: Cash crop. It was a cash crop. Just like in Maryland, it's tobacco. There -- It was cash over there. Yeah, and it was a lot of work, too, because boy, picking tomatoes is something else. A bushel of tomatoes. They used to have hampers like --not hampers, but boxes with a section like an orange crate and you had to built your own and put your name on it so it wouldn't get mixed up with the others. And when they emptied them, you'd take them to the factory and they would pile them up, sometimes maybe four or five hundred baskets, and they'd work day and night processing them. It was really

funny how they: It was an old steam engine they had in to burn wood and this big, old steam engine would furnish enough steam to scald those tomatoes and also to run the machinery, the cans, that would take the cans up to the cook, the vats where they were cooked. It was amazing that just that one steam engine would do all that and furnish the belt power to run, too, to run equipment.

Then, let's see. What can we go from there? I bet this is the worst one you've ever had!

DW: Oh no!

HR: No?

DW: I mean, I enjoy all of them. I mean, it's amazing what people remember. What types of games did you play? Did you have time to play games?

HR: Not too much.

DW: Or other than the feather on the back of the neck? [Laughter]

HR: Back of the neck, yeah! [Laughter]

DW: So, what were your chores other than the tomatoes? Is that pretty much it?

HR: Well, we had wheat, oats and rye. We had -- Oh, I wish you could have seen, they call it the binder, the thing that cuts the wheat? We pull it by horses, three horses, and it cuts the wheat, ties it up and throws it out. And, you have a little catch that catches on the side where you can -- If you want to pile it up in one pile, you carry about five or six bails and pile it up in one long row, so when you bring your wagon to pick it up, why, you didn't have to go all over the field, just one place, you know.

And, they had a thrasher. I think they call it this old baby, Nodaway Holmes. Steam-power. To pull those thrashers and my job was, as before, they had the blowers to blow the straw out. I had a horse and a rail, a stick about, well, 12 feet long, and I'd stand on

the rail and drive the horse right through where the horse was dumped? And pull it and stack it. Pull it out. Oh, what a job that was! That old chaffing round your neck and I was so happy when they came with the blowers. Having the blowers would just, you know, pile it up for you. Didn't have to do that.

And under there, they had two men to bag the wheat up. Put bags and you had damper bags. Turn it on this way and you can put two bushels that way and two bushels in this one. Oh, they had all kinds of different ways, but that darn old, big, old tractor, Nodaway Holmes used to drink more water for that steam, and the wood. You had to take cords and cords of woods to keep it going.

DW: Oh, for the steam engine?

HR: Steam engine. Steam engine. That's the only power then. We didn't have any gasoline. No more than the boats. I think the boats had it before we had tractors.

DW: Oh, okay.

HR: That's before tractors.

DW: Now, did you go out -- You lived on the water? Did you live on the water?

HR: Not far from the water.

DW: Did you go out and do a lot of --?

HR: Fishing?

DW: Fishing?

HR: Yeah, my father used to take me fishing quite a bit. I'm the only one that messed around with the water, but he was old sailor. A Windjammer with wind. He used to haul freights from Washington to Baltimore and I think some place in North Carolina down by the Bay.

DW: So, did you get a lot of food from the water?

HR: Beg your pardon?

DW: Did you get food from the water?

HR: Oh yeah!

DW: Other than fish?

HR: Fish, oysters, crabs, clams. Yeah. At that time, you could fish the year-round, but now you don't have it.

DW: Did you have to get licenses then?

HR: No.

DW: No?

HR: No. No licenses. Fish the -- I remember when the German carp came around. The carp -
- Everybody's crazy about them. Big fish, and they weren't bad, and they would live in
fresh water. So, they used these big barrels and go down—

[End of Side 1, Tape 1 of 2]

[Begin Side 2, Tape 1 of 2]

and try to put them in barrels and bring them home and have fish ponds. And, the fish ponds
and in the winter they had fish. And, that used to work both ways, too, because we had
an ice house and we had a pond, see. In the winter time, if we had real winters, when it
froze up, boy, you would skate and take a cross-cut saw and take on handle off and cut
the ice and put in the wagon, take it up. We had the ice house was on a slant where you
back up to it and just take the tailgate out and the ice just slides right out of the house.
And then, we had -- It was a lot of fun. We had, did a lot of ice skating then, too. A lot

of fun.

In the summertime, then, you have your, you put your straw and sawdust on it to keep it from melting too fast. But in the hottest day, they'll tell you go down to the ice house and bring some ice out. And down in the woods, these doggone snakes, they were in there cooling off, too. See? Oh, my God, I used to get so doggone mad and the worst part is: The guys used to come over and help bring that team over and the wagon, haul the ice and fill it up and never come back and get the ice. Always send the wives and I had to go down--[laughter] -- I had to go down that place -- [laughter] --ice house and get it--[laughter]

So, I got --I was so frightened one time. I was down there and happen to look up and here's a doggone black snack and boy! So, I went home and got the gun and start shooting around there. So, every time before I'd go in there, I'd start shooting before I'd go down there! [Laughter] Oh boy!

DW: So, did you ever get bit by any of the snakes?

HR: Beg your pardon?

DW: Did you ever get bit by any of the snakes?

HR: No. Uh uh. I think I've had a lot trouble here with snakes. This place was closed for five or six years and when I came down here in 1968 opened up. I did a lot of work. I put a bathroom back there. It was an open place under the tub and the snakes, mice, rats and everything else would come in here. So, I got up one morning and went to the bathroom. I put my hand on the bowl and something cold. I happened to look down and I had my hand on a black snake. So [laughter] --So, ever since then, I'm not as scared as I was. Eew! [Laughter] I don't know. That happened quite a bit.

Now, let's see. What's the next thing we can talk about?

DW: What did -- How did black folks get news at that time? News, any type of news?

HR: News was very, very scarce then and very slow. There was a paper called *Grit*. I don't know where it came from. They used to sell it every weekend. Was it every weekend or every month? Every weekend I guess. Only once a week you only got the paper. And, the news might have been a couple weeks old. There was nothing. I don't remember when they started the daily paper, but I remember Washington had a *Times Herald*, *Evening Star*, and *The Washington Post*. My brother in Washington used to be so kind to send us the comic section of those papers, and they used to kid me. Say, anytime they want to find me, I'd be up in the hall reading the paper and laughing. [Chuckle] Reading the funny paper and laughing! [Laughter] Anytime you wouldn't to find anybody in the house, we -- This old house we had, I think it was four bedrooms, and it had a big hall. In the front, they had a window. So in this little cupboard, that's where I'd be. They couldn't see me very good. I'd be up there laughing! [Laughter] The good, old "Happy Hooligan", "Cats and Jammer Kids", "Spark Plug" the race horse, "Barney Google," "Mutt and Jeff". Oh, so many of them.

DW: Interesting. How about family health? What did y'all do if someone got sick?

HR: Yeah. Well, family health was very poor. In fact, those doctors then, they weren't doctors. They were just first aid guys. This -- The nearest doctor was at Stratford, Stratford, Virginia. He lived in the home of General Robert E. Lee. Think it was Robert E. Lee? Yeah. Yeah, Robert E. Lee. Stratford, which is about seven, seven miles from home, and the only transportation we had then was horses and buggy. And, these guys, I remember, my mother had a terrible toothache and the guy came down there one night.

And, I guess he had been up, maybe two or three nights. So, he had to take a nap before he could even look at her. After he looked at her, he took a match, a wooden match. See, a wooden stem match and burn it and put it down there in the tooth, in the cavity. I'll never forget that. I don't know what good that'd do, but he did it! [Laughter]

DW: Did that help her?

HR: Yeah. It did. That helped her or maybe just the idea, she came around, sometimes helps, too. Yeah, we had -- Well, 19 -- Yeah, around 1919, flu, influenza. It killed a lot, a lot of people. It was just after the war -- that influenza killed more people than the World War I did. And by living on the highway, my father used to -- We had two big, what's the name of them trees? Locust -- Not locust. Yeah, locust. Two locust trees, one on each side [of the] gate. He had that little bench on down the road. He wanted to talk if anyway anybody come by. And, they used to bring the bodies through there, horse and hearse. They had a black horse. Everything was black then. Black horses, shiny black and the hearse all polished up, and bring the bodies in on steamboat. See transportation was all by water, you know. And, his friend was the undertaker, so they'd always stop with the body and they'd take -- they maybe talk about an hour before [chuckle] and I'd be so doggone scared! [Laughter]

I remember once we were up in wharf, a place called Deep Point, a wharf on the south, and...little box in -- brass on the side. I didn't know about, I start playing with them and my father said, "Hey, hey, hey. Come on. Come on. Stop playing with that. That's a body. That's a coffin." [Laughter] Boy! I had a heck of a time living that down, trying to forget.

But, the transportation was terrible. Now where we lived, we were on the #9 Route. To

go to north -- north, my brother went to Hampton and I believe it was his graduation -- 1920. My little sister was just a baby then. We had to get on the boat in afternoon, all night trip to Washington, and stay in Washington all day. 6:00 we got on the Norfolk boat and at that time, you had to sit up all night because no state rooms for you. And, on down. And the rear of the ship, and stayed down in Norfolk all day, picked him up, got on this boat, come on back to Washington, stay in Washington the whole day and get on the Potomac River boat and go back home. So, it really was four-day trip

DW: Wow!

HR: Um hmm.

DW: So, they didn't have anything from Montross to, down to Norfolk?

HR: Um hmm.

DW: Wow!

HR: That was --No. The nearest railroad was 21, 20 -- no, 52 miles from where we lived.

DW: Oh!

HR: 52 miles. The reason, because, with the transportation, the boat, see, it wouldn't pay them to put a railroad in. See, we on a peninsula line. Water on each side and boats on each side. Steamboat trying to go -- Majestic, Endeavor and a whole slang of them. They were -- Then, we had a lot of pleasure boats, too. E. Madison Hall: I guess you've heard of that. E. Madison Hall had dances and so. They had a lot of fun.

Now, I guess that's enough of that. Let's see. What can we jump on now?

DW: What church did your family go to?

HR: Yes. Shiloh Baptist Church which is about a mile and a half from home. Shiloh Baptist Church. My mother used to play the organ there, and my father, he was from a different

section. His church was Salem Baptist Church in Machida, Virginia.

DW: Did y'all do a lot of activities with, at the church?

HR: Quite a bit. Yes. Sundays. Oh, I can remember when they used to have candles. See, they didn't have electricity then. Candles and little cups that clip onto the branch and they would light them up on Christmas Day on a Christmas tree. Little cups like.

DW: A real candle?

HR: A real candle. Real candles. Dangerous. Dangerous.

DW: The cups never caught fire?

HR: Yeah. There was plenty fire, but they -- somebody had to be there all the time, to watch them. And then, you'd be very careful where you'd put them on the tree, too, not under another. But, that was the most beautiful thing, and that was really Christmassy. Looked like Christmas. It always snow. We always had a Christmas snow. And, we used to get fireworks on Christmas. Always on Christmas, not on 4th of July. And, I guess it's a very good thing, too, because we were bad and get some firecrackers and tie it to a cat's tail turn her loose. [Laughter] Burn two or three house down with them. Had to quit that! Instead of the cat going to the fields somewhere, she'd go right under the house. Fire -- of all that firecrackers! Pow! Pow!

[End of Side 1, Tape 1 of 2, Copy 2]

HR: But, we had some real fireworks though. They were -- They were loud. Um, boy, they were loud. [Chuckle] Churches. Then in the summer, we'd have -- A certain time in the summer, they have a get-together. They call it a Homecoming for people who would be

going to New York or some city or moved somewhere else. They try to get home on a certain day, and that was very nice, to see your old friends.

I believe I'm running out now.

DW: How did you meet your wife?

HR: Beg your pardon?

DW: How did you meet your wife?

HR: Oh yes.

DW: How old were you?

HR: [chuckle] Well, let's see. Yeah, when I met her, it was back in -- When was it? I was working at the Shoreham then. Let's see. Now, I was working at -- no it must have been around '30, 1930, and I was working as a baker. Not as a baker, pastry cook at the Wardman Park Hotel which is on, at that time, was Connecticut and Woodley Road. And, I worked -- At that time, we didn't have any hours. You had a time. You had a certain time to be there and do the work, but you had to stay until you finished, everything was over. That's seven days a week.

So, this Sunday night, my friend, a butcher -- Albert Hood, said, "Come on. Go with me tonight when you get off and we got some new people who want to meet." So, I followed him and on U Street, 1700 block of U Street, in that area, and she didn't [pause] -- didn't appeal too much. But I didn't go back, but she asked about me. She asked him and when I went back, boy, things changed a little bit! [Laughter] Blind date -- a blind date.

So, we were a couple years, I guess, we went around. So later on, I got disgusted running around so much, I said, "well, I might as well settle down." So, [chuckle] I got married. So, looked what I picked out! [Laughter]

DW: So, now how old were you when you got married.

HR: 26. Yeah, 26. I think I was 26. Yeah. I said I wasn't gonna get married until I was 36.

DW: So, you jumped the gun about 10 years!

HR: Yeah! [Laughter] Well, after all, I was kind of wild, too, running around.

DW: What do you remember about your wedding? Where was it?

HR: Yeah.

DW: Did you have a honeymoon?

HR: No. Oh, I used to take her over to, at that time, they had soda fountains. You go and get a banana split and sort like that. And, she was working for Henry's...Anyway, it was some government official from Columbia, South America. She was off on Tuesdays and so was I. No, no, she had a half a day off on Tuesday. She had to be there all the time. We went to, had my friend take us to ... Park and we waited for her to get off, then we went to Rockville. Rockville, and believe it or not, that doggone guy charged \$2.75 for a marriage license.

DW: Was that high?

HR: High? Yeah. I'm still stuck. Ain't got my money's worth! So, that's why we got married. And, we were married right there in Rockville. So that afternoon, we came on back to, went to what's his name's place -- Dayton, in to the pool. Francis Poole in Georgetown. And from there, we went to, for dinner, there was a place near the Lincoln Theater. No, the Republic Theater on U Street. We knew the guy there. He had chicken and dumplings. That's what we had for our first dinner: chicken and dumplings! [Laughter] Oh boy! That was our dinner! And then, we went on home. She went to her house and I went on to mine, and we'd see each other weekends. I stayed at my brother's

house then.

And the lady next door, she was a watch dog. The old lady: she sits on the porch all the time and knew everything that's was gonna on, see. Lightfoot -- Her name is Lightfoot, and she saw in the paper where I was married and told me sister in-law and my brother worked at the Naval Department; and she called -- called him and the poor guy got sick. I don't know why. [Chuckle] He stayed home for three days! He couldn't work.

[Laughter] I guess he said, "What's that devil gone and done!" [Laughter] Oh gee! Oh my golly! Times I've had. The times I had, good and bad.

And once, it was early jobs...she...I used to go to New Jersey during the summer and come back and work in the winter, sometimes I'd run out of cash money and I'd allow myself 25¢ a day to live on, and I could live on it very easily. I didn't do any streetcar riding back then. It was the time of the streetcars. I used to go down to a restaurant on 7th Street and get a lamb stew for 15¢. They give a big bowl of lamb stew, two slices of bread and a glass of water for 15¢. So a couple days, I'd save a dime. I'd be able to buy a pie because every other day I'd buy a slice of pie! [Laughter] Oh gee! Yeah, I'd walk the streets. One thing I had: plenty clothes. I spoiled my shoes: They were worn out I'd been walking so much. In the fall, the ice, you know, the ice and wet. Oh boy, it was rough. But the way I made it, by staying my brother, why I didn't have to worry much for food. I was sleeping there. I should have because everything was tight then.

And this -- I went to Wardman Park Hotel asking. They always tell you, "No, no, no. Don't need anyone. Don't need anyone." So this time, the guy said, "Well, wait a minute now. This guy's going on a vacation for two weeks and we need somebody to help out here." So, he took me on. Now, I didn't know anything but baking, didn't know

anything about making ice cream or anything. And my regular job was making Melba toast, Melba toast, and I made a bread -- burned two, three, and almost four... but after four, I caught the hang of it. [Laughter] Oh, you ought to see me washing that stuff down the sink. [Chuckle] Sort of washing it down! [Laughter] Then luckily enough to find a fellow by the name of Dennis somewhere up in Virginia, and oh yeah. And, he was a lazy -- So I become -- The guy came back and I had worked around there so much until he said, "I guess, well, this guy can help us out."

So, I learned how to wash pots and so on...Then, I worked at that for a couple weeks and then they gave me the job of head pot washer! So, I had to help him to do the baking and the pastry and stuff. [Laughter] So, I soon learned how to make éclairs and things like that and also ice cream.

Oh, right away I messed up on the ice cream. They had one of these -- That's a long time ago. You used it when...I think, oh, about 10 gallons. 10 gallons. No, it must have been 5 gallons. Well at that time, we used to use 5 gallons of 20% cream, 2 gallons of milk and 4 dozen of eggs -- 4 dozen of eggs...4 dozen of eggs. And, we take 5 gallons and make 10 gallons of ice cream...Beat it up, see, beat it up. And, that was very, very helpful. And as far as the taste, I don't know if you know éclairs? Wasn't no éclairs, but Napoleons with the crust, cream in between. I made the puff paste, and I guess, at that time, by being pretty strong, I could roll out the 5 pound puff paste. This is what you call the puff paste...and I thought...had to be real stiff and you had to just keep rolling and rolling and folding and folding seven times. And when you cut it, you don't see no fat at all. You cut in about -- It was thick when it comes up, crisp and use it for chicken pot pie.

DW: Oh.

HR: Chicken pot pie or chicken patty. Chicken patty. Patty shells. They were called patty shells and they were round like that. I got pretty good on that. In fact, by my experience on that, I saved my job one time. I came from 1:00 from the Shoreham Hotel when the Shoreham, a couple days before it opened, and I had to be in there one year. New cooks, see, how they do, they don't tell nobody nothing. Just after midnight, a new crew walks in and everybody had to go. So, by me coming over with the manager from 1:00...they had to give me some consideration to get it in. He came in there one day and I had made patty shells, a couple hundreds of them, and the guy looked at them and said, "My God, that thing--they won't raise up." You know. They'd been using regular butter and making real thick, but what I made was real fluffy and puff up. So-

[End of Side 2, Tape 1 of 2]

[Begin Side 1, Tape 2 of 2]

DW: 2, Side 3, Interview with Mr. Harry Reed.

HR: Thank you. Well, we left off on the patty shells, puff paste. Puff paste was one that you made croutons, all kinds of fancy things out of it - butterflies and quite a few different sized patties. And gee, I can't think of the names now of scuba bubba, scuba something. But anyway, I was very lucky with my puff paste and by the patties coming out so nicely, the German baker we had there, too, he helped me because he cooked into the regular baking oven where they have the steam. It's the steam, you know. The boss came down and hit me on the shoulder and said, "From now on, you make the patty shells. You

make your puff paste.” Just before we went to ... you see! [Laughter]

So, there I worked until I kept working up and I became the night chef, night pastry chef; that is, working from 4 until 10 or anytime some old drunk would come up here around 10:00 and say, “Oh, this is my birthday. I want a birthday cake,” and I have to stay and make a birthday cake. We kept sponge cake, by the sponge cake in the refrigerator so all we had to do was we had the butter cream and fondant -- fondant, we call it, icing.

Fondant was real -- real candy and put a little, split it and put a little between. Or if we had one thick enough, we make it with nothing in, no layers and just write on it and decorate it and send it on up. That’s all. 10:00 at night. 20 minutes, we go on home.

The birthday cake --We kept, you know, everything on hand. We had a big cardboard box like as that and we kept it in the icebox.

Or, they want a spumoni or some special ice cream. Was that to -- Tatoni? Tatoni? Well anyway, this tatoni was very special. You made it in a paper cup, and you had tutti fruitti ice cream with brandy in it. I can’t think of the name of it now, but it was tatoni. Tatoni, but it was another name that was currently there. It was, it was very interesting, and the different things you get into.

And sometimes, you have an ice -- No baked Alaska. You remember Baked Alaska, don’t you?

DW: Um.

HR: Yeah, put it in the oven and bake it. Ice cream. And, we’d have to put them on a long, I guess about 8 or 10” platter and on that end, we had a light, had a light. We could make it long like this and put this egg white and put it in the oven, real hot oven and lightly brown. Then, we’d have sugar -- make a angel hair they call. Angel hair, you know,

sugar. You make, you spin the sugar and made it angel hair and you put it around the line and also on it.

DW: Oh, sort of like cotton candy?

HR: Yeah, cotton candy. Yeah, that's what it was, cotton candy. Oh, it used to be beautiful. When they go in the dining room, show that baby. Walk through, people look at it.

DW: So how long -- You were saying before, you had --What time did you have to go to work?

HR: I think it was 8:00. I believe it was 8:00. Okay. 8:00 until 2:30. 2:30, you rest up until 5:00. Yeah, you had to be back at 5:00. Then, I used to -- It wasn't too far from the zoo, so that's where I would spend the, those few hours: at the zoo! But, the only thing I never go near is the snake house. I kept walking! [Laughter] All the other houses were alright, but nothing about the snake house. At that time, they had a little pavilion there... Now, let's think of something else that I can talk about.

DW: Let's see. What did you do for entertainment?

HR: That wasn't very much. Entertainment. I didn't -- I had to work, there wasn't much entertainment. Very much, very little. Course, I did drink a little whiskey. Come to think about it [chuckle], those days we had rent parties, so every Saturday [laughter] and we used to go there and get that bootleg beer, that bootleg whiskey, and they had chitlins's, pig feet, potato salad. Saturday evening. Boy, I used to go most every week to go somewhere and I remember on Vernon Street --18 and Vernon --We had been going there quite awhile, everybody there. This time we down and we were doing good. Chitlins's were good. Everything's good, but they had more people than they was expecting to. They hadn't prepared for so many, so I believe they sent out and got a

bucket of chitlins's and thawed them out...They didn't wash them or anything. Those boys were cracking corn down there. You should've seen! [laughter] I don't know if it was the chitlins's or that lousy corn liquor. Boy, I was sick for three days! Boy, I'll tell you. It was terrible. So, I don't -- I still don't eat no chitlins's. Ooh.

And, I've just started eating watermelon. That same thing happened to me in New Jersey, too, because you had a beach party, hot dogs and so on. And then at the place I worked, they had another party, starting drinking whiskey and watermelon. Boy, that whiskey and watermelon almost got me. Whew! That's about the entire entertainment and that's just about all that we did. [Laughter]

DW: What part has religion played in your life? What church do you attend? Do you participate in church activities? A member of any committees? What does your church mean to you? What role does it play in your life? Are you involved with other churches or religious organizations? I know that's a lot of questions.

HR: Uh hmm. Yeah, well. I joined the church when I was in the Academy, at the Academy. And from there, we used to follow them around quite a bit. We had a quartet where you go around and sing at different churches. Of course, I was singing a barbaration, you know. And of course, we had a good tenor and a good base; so as far as the other was concerned, it wasn't important. [Chuckle]

Some day I joined the church on Galilee Baptist Church in the summer -- in the middle 20's. I don't know. I didn't do very much until I came back of the Army after being round all the -- four or five years, I joined church which my wife, Ethel, belonged to, Metropolitan Baptist Church. Metropolitan Baptist. And, I used to do a lot of recording for them, and I think they have a lot of tapes here now, out in the garage out

down...Guess I have to get somebody there for Christmas. Singing the anthem.

I was baptized in -- at home at #9, yeah #9...called Old Ferry Road which was -- But anyway, I never was very active in church.

DW: What kind of community activities do you or did you participate in, like bowling, cards, vacation, skiing, or whatever?

HR: Well, not very much, of any of it. My -- I guess I can say that fishing was it more than anything else. No bowling and cards -- No, no cards. What else? Let's see. I think that's about -- fishing, music. I like music. Yeah. Dancing and so on. That's about all I can think of.

DW: Did you go to any of the county fairs down here in the County, different --?

HR: I -- Let's see. The only Fair that I can remember is the one I went to in Cape May, New Jersey. Yeah, they had -- Oh yeah. Yeah, when I was a kid they had fairs at Montross. Yeah, but -- Yeah, I really enjoyed them, too, because the snake doctors and oh, all these guys. [Laughter] And the guys with the rattlesnakes and come out and hold them in their hands like that. It was wrapped all around his arm. [Laughter] Then, the horse races. I liked the races. Yeah, the races. I like the races, too. I forgot that. And, my favorite track, race track was in Baltimore.

DW: Pimlico?

HR: Pimlico. Pimlico.

DW: How about family reunions? Do you have a lot of family reunions?

HR: Well, we try to. I think we've had -- We've only had about three, three large ones. Course, we do have a family, I wouldn't say a reunion, more like a gathering, small. Like, we had a couple weeks ago, but the last family reunion was, like, after my operation

and I don't even know how long that's been. But anyway, we met down home at General Robert E. Lee's birth place, right on the Potomac and we had a wonderful time. And not only my family, but my cousins, too -- the Reeds. The other Reeds from my dad, they came. Some relation to my father's. My father's -- Their father was my father's uncle. I don't know what we'd call that. [Laughter] I don't know how it mixed up there.

[Laughter] And, I met Miss Minnie over there. Minnie Jones? You don't remember her, do you? Half-sister. After all these years, I met her. When I had my operation, went back for a check-up, she was there, too, and she had one. So, we started talking and said, "Are you from -- I heard that your from Virginia."

I said, "Yeah."

Said, "I'm from Virginia, too."

I said, "Yeah. Where about?"

She said, "Montross."

I said, "Montross?"

"Yes." And then, I started to name some people and she said, "No, I have a brother there now named Joe Tate."

So, I knew a Joe Tate there. And I said, "No, it can't be her brother." So, she told me the names of a lot of people she knew. And, I said, "Well, I know. I'll ask my brother." Joe was living then.

He said, "What? Minnie Jones? Minnie Jones? You've seen her." Boy, he was so surprised. He said, "Yeah." He said, "I've been trying to find her for the last 30 some years." And he said, "Yeah. She's our half-sister." I was so surprised and so, kept -- I brought him over here and saw her. But, it's so funny how we met there because she

said, "My father was George Reed."

I said, "George Reed? That's my father's name!"

So, she said, "Now, there's two George Reeds over there. One that's real black and the other one is light colored. Which one you from?"

I said, "My father was called Earl ...George Reed. He's the light one."

And she said, "Oh yeah." She said, "That's my father."

"Huh?" [laughter] Boy, we had a time! And she started naming people, and I asked my brother did he know anyone by the name of Joe Tate besides Joe Tate in Montross.

He said, "Yeah, don't you remember this old drunkard used to work for our daddy? He stayed drunk all the time. Used to curse him out." [Laughter] He said, "Yeah. That's Joe Tate." So, that's how we met. Just like that, and I tried to take care of her until she passed away, I guess six years ago. She was 106 years old. 106. Not a wrinkle on the face. All her teeth.

DW: 106!

HR: I'm sure you read about her. She's the one that froze to death down Colton's Point.

DW: Oh yeah.

HR: Now, are we running out?

DW: I think we're almost running out. You said you back to, or you moved here to St. Mary's in '68.

HR: '68.

DW: '68, but you've been coming back and forth before that time.

HR: Oh yeah. Yeah.

DW: Because this is your summer place, right?

HR: That's right.

DW: So, once you moved back here to the County, how do you feel like the things have changed since then, since '68 when you moved back here? Or, do you feel that they have changed?

HR: Yeah, I do. I think it's changed quite a bit, but -- and for the better. Yeah. Of course, now we have better Presidents of the Association, the guys that really working to do something on it. If we had, if we had the same Board, President and the Board we have now, if we had this 15 years ago, oh boy, this would really be some place. It would really -- I wish you could see how these pictures up there...up there. And also, here the whole club let the front wash away and they had to put --

DW: A sea wall?

HR: Yeah, a sea wall with stones this times. With stones so it couldn't wash. Yeah, it's changed quite a bit.

DW: So, you're talking about -- Here, as far as Longview, you're talking about the Longview area.

HR: Yeah. Longview. And, I've always liked the people down here. In fact, I have 27 acres back home that I could go right on the main highway, but I've been away so long now. I don't know nobody there. I don't have nobody. In Washington, I don't know anyone in Washington. I do have a, my sister's down in Warsaw in a home and she doesn't know day from night. All I have is a nephew now.

DW: Now, they're the ones that just recently visited?

HR: Yeah.

DW: Now, I meant to ask you this when you were talking about family reunions: Now, what

areas did people come from?

HR: Okay.

DW: When you have your gatherings.

HR: Chicago, New York, upstate New York I think --West Oak or something like that in New York, and let's see -- New Jersey, Hoboken, New Jersey, and Virginia, Newport News, and Montross, Richmond, and where else? ...New York. Yeah, I think that's --That's about it for places. Now, I still have them in Canada and California, a couple in California -- three in California. It's too expensive for them to come, even for summertime. We have about 29, I think, people all together. Yeah, the one from Richmond: She didn't get in until late because she had a ticket to go to Florida from last year and it took three days before she was to go, she fell off of the bed and broke her leg. So, they just got, now they just -- She's walking pretty good and can use the ticket.

DW: Now, this area here, I remember when I was younger and used to visit, this is mostly -- Was Longview built for, as summer homes for blacks?

HR: Yeah, um hmm.

DW: And it was mostly that's what it was -- was summer homes at that time?

HR: Summer homes. That's right. Summer homes and that's why we don't have any -- I don't know if you notice that we don't have any closets in these rooms here. [Chuckle] Yeah, for summer. This -- 1952. Yeah, we bought this place in 1952. John Porter and I and we ran out of money after we got so far. Leroy came to our rescue. And, he was a lifesaver. He saved the whole place. This place wouldn't be anything if it hadn't been for him. He knew how to handle crooks. [Laughter] Yeah. But, I like, I love it down here and the people -- so nice. They're not...my home. All those new guys. Well before,

they were straining their neck down there.

But now when I was a kid, it was altogether different. They had a Coca Cola plant down at McGuire's Wharf just across the river from home, and these whites want my father to go, put to share in it. And this guy came up from Florida, he raised cane. Didn't want no black man. So, so they were asked, they changed --Just one guy, his name was Carl, and he had a bank. He married a banker's daughter, so he took over the bank and he changed everything: the salaries and they couldn't go this place and couldn't go that place. He even cut the, cut their salaries, paying too much. But before then, why we hardly knew we were black. And...Jackson used to come in, my father used play together with the kids, the Judge Seldon, Judge Seldon. Well, a lot of the big shots. So a real lot of change.

DW: Well, how did you find out about this area here?

HR: This guy, I think it was advertised in...knew about it. I didn't. So one Sunday, I wasn't in for it at all, see I worked two jobs most of the time, two jobs: See, in the government and also the bake shop. I worked, I used to get off at quarter of -- yeah, quarter after 4. Well anyway, I had 15 minutes to get to the other job, so I had to go through Rock Creek Park right up the hill to the Shoreham Hotel. So, that's 6:00. It think it was 6:00. Yeah, I would be on the job. So, I don't know. Yeah. Come on go down to Longview Beach. New beaches down here now. So, they talked me into it. My wife rode down here with John Porter and his wife and came in here. See, this was old Gene Tunney's farm, the prize fighter. Jack Dempsey and Gene Tunney? This is Tunney's. This is Tunney's uncle, so...it's dairy cows. And, there was no trees. All these trees you see around here now? No trees. There wasn't no trees. No trees. Just farm land. On the hotel, you look

down here it was nothing. Just beautiful. Just like, just like in Illinois and Indiana. Fly over the country acres and a field going this way and a field going that way.

Checkerboard. Was beautiful. Anybody that came down here, mostly everybody bought. Fell in love with it. We bought three lots on the corner up here where Redmond is, and

[End of Side 2, Tape 1 of 2, Copy 2]

HR: Tell you, the time we got [chuckle] back on the hill, somebody else had

[End of Side 1, Tape 2 of 2]

[Begin Side 2, Tape 2 of 2]

DW: The interview with Mr. Harry Reed continued.

HR: So, we settled for those three lots that -- No, we wanted the three lots down here on the waterfront, but they were sold. So, we bought those three lots on the side of Redmond's place up there and we had the three. I'm wrong because the three of us were on the waterfront just up here, and this lot here was a commercial lot and that had been sold. But, we held onto those lots for two weeks and after awhile, the guy who bought this came, he gave it up. He didn't want it. So, Porter called me up and we bought it, and that same year, it was fall, we started building. And at first, they wanted a little hot dog stand. So, I didn't want that and I'm always wanted a high ceiling, so I had them put a 9-foot ceiling. And at one time, it was 33 rooms, but I cut quite a few of them up and made one big room right here.

And, the neighborhood is good. Wonderful people. Yeah, I like it. I don't know how

long I can hold onto it now unless you come up here and take it over. [Laughter] It's a little too big for me now, too much.

DW: But you still have the community, the people. They have --You have a playground.

HR: Um hmm.

DW: Well, you have a fence--

HR: Yeah.

DW: On the side of your homes, so they still fish and you have a playground.

HR: The playground is all fenced in, even across the street. Even the tennis courts and all, and that makes it very, very good because before when I had no fences, the guys parked everywhere up through your yard, you know. And, that's really nice, and I wish you could see that club house now that it's fixed up. Its new people: They really fixed it up nicely.

And, we owe it all to your daddy because he's the one who brought us through. And we have the -- Up on the wall now, we have the license for the slot machine and the jukebox.

DW: Oh yeah?

HR: Yeah! [Laughter]

DW: I remember having good times here when I was young and I'm sure that most folks who have been through here would say the same thing.

HR: Yeah. Oh, used to have a good time. I sent the film away. This guy's supposed to put it on cassette -- not a cassette, a film from what you call it on the television. I mean

DW: Oh, the video?

HR: Video. If he do, I certainly hope it comes out good because I got the whole family right on it here on the stair steps.

DW: Oh my!

HR: Stair steps right on down. [Laughter]

DW: That would be something!

HR: Yeah.

DW: Now, I remember the island, the little island being out there.

HR: Yeah.

DW: I guess that was years and years ago.

HR: Yeah.

DW: Did people go out there and fish or just walk out there or what?

HR: Yeah. No, that island there: They tell me years and years ago, there used to be a wharf out there. See, there's a bar that you can walk from the shore that holds you when the tide is low out to the -- and the Boy Scouts used to play at -- have their little jamboree over there at night and see the fire burning and so on, camp. It was large then when we first came down here. Then in 1954, we had that terrible storm, The Hazel. Hazel cut it mostly down. And from there, started working on it. I guess about 10 -- It was a little tree that was hanging on that big rock for a long, long time before she went down. Now, you can't see anything. It's all just a danger spot now for boats though because some of the larger stones you hardly see and it seems like they made so they push the motor right off your boat, outboard motor.

DW: Oh, so that's a bad sandbar.

HR: Yes.

DW: Even with the rocks out there, too.

HR: They won't put anything. They have a little stake there. What good does that do? Just a

little stake.. they sale from the beach up there: Wicomico Shores. There's a lot of sailboats there. They come down here and the guy got hung up on that sandbar couple years ago. He said, "I don't know what happened. I've been sailing up and down this river for seven years and the first time I got on this bar." See nothing at the shore where they should sail. Rocks.

DW: Well, it's beautiful out here, though.

HR: Yeah. Well, if I was a little younger now, we could enjoy it. For all these years, though, we have to work so hard didn't have time to enjoy. Now we can. My family's crazy about it. They want me to leave it in the family. I don't know what to do. I know if I do, it'd be a mess. You know, our family. You were lucky. You all were lucky. [Laughter] Big mess. [Chuckle]

DW: We're winding down now.

HR: Winding down.

DW: What -- Let's see. It says, "How have you contributed to the County?" What type of awards, certificates have you received in your lifetime? That could be any type of award.

HR: Oh boy. I got a gang of them from the Department, but they all just on paper, no money. Oh, I guess I've seen, let's me -- in Security Department. What's this lady's name now? I think I put -- I got a gang somewhere in the box here, somewhere. Many, many. I say at least 15 of them different awards, you know.

DW: Were they from work? Community?

HR: Yes, work. From work, not the community. All from work and help. Help out different things.

DW: Okay.

HR: Even the hungry or something. I can't think of it. Gee, I wish I would have known that before. Got them out and looked at them, you know. Yeah, I had -- Now, you never did -- Did you ever come to my house in Washington? Did you ever come to my house in Washington?

DW: Um hmm [no].

HR: Yeah, down the stairs I had the whole side, down the basement wall, covered with awards and so on.

DW: So, you said: Where were your awards and certificates from?

HR: Mostly from Department of Agriculture, Personnel and also quite a few from, quite, organizations in Washington, such as the lawyer's office. I had helped them out once. And also, now I do remember one from this fella who was doing some special work for the University of California and I did a little research for him, and I got the next one from -- I guess you'd call it award.

DW: Okay. This is the last question. What do you think of the direction that the County is going in today? Do you believe St. Mary's become an urban rather than a rural county?

HR: That's hard to say. I have to think this one over. I think, I don't know. It's building up mighty fast, isn't it?

DW: Um hmm [yes].

HR: It's been fast. You know, I think its hold its own urban for awhile...I think it'll hold on.

DW: You think it'll still stay county for awhile longer?

HR: Yeah, county. Um hmm. Yeah, I think so.

DW: Alright. Thank you very much!

HR: Oh, I hope I've said something that will be helpful to somebody or somebody can get a

good laugh out of it at least! [Laughter]

DW: Well, this has been very informative. It's always nice to talk to people who have knowledge of things that have gone on before that we didn't know anything about. So, thank you again.

HR: Well, thank you. It's very nice talking to you. You've done a wonderful job. You've made me open my mouth a little bit and talk. [Laughter] I don't usually do much talking! [Laughter] Thank you a lot.

[End of Side 2, Tape 2 of 2]