

GUFFRIE SMITH

Interviewer: Merideth Taylor

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Merideth Taylor: This is Merideth Taylor, and it's July 19, 1999. I'm in the home, in Scotland, Maryland, of Guffrie Smith and Parthenia Smith. And their daughter Wendy is here also, and granddaughter...

(Voice of M.T. drowned out by child's voice in background)

I'm interviewing Guffrie Smith for the UCAC. Okay. This first question—and just take your time, because this tape will be edited, and it doesn't matter, except that you feel comfortable. All right. What were the—I have some suggestions after the questions, too. What were the times like when you were a child? Like, how did you and your family live, and where did you live?

Guffrie Smith: We lived in this area, mostly. Down on [Route] 5. My mother died when I was five, and so I went from one of my families to the other. Then I went to my Uncle James'. He was down on _____ (*unintelligible*). We stayed there for [a couple of years], until I was about through grade school. I can't tell you exactly how many, how far I went up in school then, but I didn't graduate, I know.

MT: Okay. Well, we can come back to asking a few more questions about school. So you lived in, basically, a farming—

GS: A farming situation, yes. That was my uncle. After my mother died, I went [to his] home. I was only five years old, but he was a good man. A good Christian man.

MT: What sort of things did you eat? Did you have the same diet as you do now, or did you have a different...

GS: Well, we grew chickens, hogs, and other animals. Calves, you know.

(*Child's voice in the background*)

He was—Go away, baby (*talking to child, presumably granddaughter*)

You know, he grew vegetables and sold them down at Scotland Beach and all along the highway. Up to Leonardtown, even. He'd supply them vegetables, in my days. So I stayed with him, I guess until I was—

MT: And did your dad stay single? Was he alone?

GS: Well, my dad...He was somebody else. My mother wasn't married to this man. So I got caught into the net.

MT: She had a fairly large family down here, with family members in the area?

GS: Yeah, my parents' family—you're talking about my mother and her brothers and sisters. Yeah, it was a regular-size family, [The] Holly family.

MT: Would you say that times were better or worse than they are now, just generally?

GS: Worse then.

MT: Worse then?

GS: Yeah, but I didn't suffer for nothing 'cause my uncle took me in: James Holly.

MT: Oh, I know that name.

GS: Yeah. 'cause he's well known in the county.

MT: And how would you say—in what ways was it better, (*corrects herself*) or in what ways was it worse then? Or better now?

GS: Well, you had—I was better prepared to work. I had different jobs, you know. I was serving in the Army, and then I came out. I was twenty-one, and I went into the Service. I stayed in there four years and [when] I came back, I was a barber. I became a barber. I cut hair for years. Out on the corner, where you came in, in the trailer park? I built a house over there in the trailer park, and ran that and worked for myself, mostly.

MT: And what's better about now? You said times were worse then?

GS: Well, it's just more around for you to do, and work, and get a job. And more people around, more businesses around. Yeah, 'cause there wasn't much here when I came along.

MT: Okay, what is your earliest memory? Think way back. What's the earliest memory you have in your life?

GS: Uh *(pause)* well, when I left one family, I went to another.

MT: Was that when you were about five?

GS: Yeah, I was about six, seven, something like that. I went with my uncle. My mother died. And then I went with him.

MT: You don't remember much about that time before?

GS: No.

MT: Okay. What about brothers and sisters? Did you have brothers and sisters? What was your relationship like, maybe they were extended family, that you considered brothers and sisters?

GS: Oh, yes. I had brothers. You know, Blanche, Lou Ellen, James, William. All of those were my brothers. S_____ was my brother and sister (?). So they of course, they've all passed away now. Yeah, they were older than me.

MT: What was your relationship with them like? How would you describe it?

GS: Oh, they were good to me. My sister, she took care of us like she was our mother. Blanche, she lived with my uncle, then she went to Baltimore and she had a family up there. But I never did get up that far. I stayed in the county. And I stayed right down here, until I—yeah, I just. Just depending on the Lord, and everybody, everybody treated me just right. All the people. I never had no confrontation that didn't amount anything to nobody.

MT: What church did you go to as you were growing up?

GS: Right out here on the corner, the Methodist church. Saint Luke's Methodist Church. You know, as you turned in on the road, that church over there?

MT: Yes.

GS: Right there where you turned, Saint Luke's.

MT: And you went there when you were growing up, and you go there now?

GS: Yes, I was [at the] same church, Saint Luke's.

MT: Did you take any trips as a child? Did you go out of the county, anywhere, as a child?

GS: Well, not much that I can remember, as a child. Now, my Uncle and all, you know, they were great church people—and we'd go and visit churches in the city. That's how I got to the city—you know, friends. But they were good to me, you know. Set me up for a good life. Wasn't no liquoring in the family *(pause)* I came up in. And I never was no drinker in life. So I got along fine with everybody. I didn't have no confrontation with nobody—that amounted to anything, anyway.

MT: How did your folks deal with health problems and illnesses when you were a child? Did you have—did you have a doctor?

GS: Doctor Bean.

MT: Doctor Bean. *(laughter)* He would make house calls?

GS: Yes, he did. Whether it be raining or snowing or blowing, he would come.

MT: Did you or your family ever go to the hospital, then? When you were growing up?

GS: You know, I didn't. I _____ before. I went into the Service, that was it. I went there. Uh.. Appendicitis, that's why I went in. And then after I went into the Service, and of course I got _____ (*some kind of sickness*) in the Service, but that's past. I went into the Service and stayed four years. I was in Italy.

MT: In the Army?

GS: Yes, in the 97th infantry Division. Black Buffalo.

MT: Oh, really? Very famous!

GS: (*laughs*) Yeah, that's what I was, yeah. I lived in a section of fellows into the war, fighting the Germans. I got wounded.

MT: How were you wounded?

GS: In my right leg, right here. Shell came, knocked my friend with me, and I fell. I ain't seen him since. I guess he's still living, but he's the only fellow that really stays on my mind.

MT: Do you ever go to any of the reunions?

GS: Haven't been yet.

(sound like something being set down)

MT: Does that bring up a lot of feelings?

GS: Oh, yeah. (*sounding choked up*)

MT: I'm sorry. I didn't think about talking about that.

GS: Yeah. (*sniffing*)

MT: Well, maybe we can come back to that then, if you want to.

GS: Yeah. Oh yeah.

MT: 'cause not a lot of people around here have gotten that kind of experience.

GS: Yeah (*pause*), [I] went all the way up there [after the] Germans. I tell you, we go up on this mountain, we went up on this mountain. Half the company went that evening, and we went the next morning.

MT: mm-hmm.

GS: I swear (*pause*), you had to walk over men. They lain all on the mountain. Then we started after them on the mountain. You could see them on the other side of the mountain, moving them around down there. So we went off the mountain—one fellow got shot, and [we were] carrying him down in a ravine, and was running down there. And we got him down there to try and comfort him. And then we had to go down further. And I went off—and they just start shelling and shelling us. And fellows was falling and running. But we were on one side, and they were on the other. And they came up to get us. And then, we would head our back to them. And we couldn't get out of the way of them. And they started shelling. There was trees, probably.

(*pause*)

And shell hit. It hit me in the back and the leg, and then the other fellow, it tore him. It fell between he and I. It tore his face up, and it tore my leg up.

MT: How did you get out of there?

GS: Well, we weren't too far from the {Red CP?} You know, where the headquarters were. Because we had just gone up that mountain and come down. Then we came back and--

(*Sound of child making noise in the background*)

--I don't like. I don't, I don't like to talk about it too much.

MT: Yeah, I was wondering if---

GS: Yeah, I'm a Purple Heart. I'm a veteran, so I been making it so far.

(*Loud child noises*)

I'll never forget, that's all.

MT: Yeah.

GS: No, no.

(Screaming girl)

MT: How long were you over there?

GS: Uh *(thinking)*, four years.

(Pause)

Got over into Italy, went on up into all those places and everything. But we didn't get to fight the enemy until later on, after we'd been there a while, you know. They were fighting, but we weren't in to fight. We just had to wait our turn to get into it. But we—we did all we could, but that was the last battle of the war.

MT: Are you thankful [that you took off]?

GS: Yes, I am.

MT: What happened when you came back?

GS: Well, I ...*(pause)*

MT: Did it take you a while to finally recover? *(continues tentatively)* Or did you just go right into—

GS: Yeah. Well, no. My leg—it's still, at times, depending on the weather, it seems like-- you know, I get that feeling that there's a slight little, you know, on account of that muscle. You know, other than that...

I been doing; pretty good. Sometimes I thank the Lord for letting me get back

(Sound of his sniffing)

MT: I didn't want this to be too painful for you. Sorry.

GS: Well, it's all right.

MT: I guess there's no way to take it away.

GS: I been getting along fine.

MT: Yeah, you sure have.

GS: [I'm] seventy-eight, so—

MT: (*surprised*) Are you seventy-eight?

GS: Yep.

MT: Wow, you look younger.

GS: Well, I been taking care of myself. I wasn't a drinker or a smoker, or a-messing around, you know.

MT: Well, let's go back to talking about your childhood for a minute.

GS: Oh, yeah! (*eagerly*)

MT: When you were real young, when you were a child, what did you like to do most? And why?

GS: Well, I liked, at my age, to follow my mother. I knew that. She was, at the time, was oyster shucking and peeling tomatoes.

MT: For the county factory?

GS: For the—yeah, they had factories.

MT: Yeah. For them, she worked to do that? Or just canning for the family?

GS: No, she was--

(*Child sneezes*)

--through there through [Julius?], that [is] how you get to Ridge and then go down to the water, you know. After you get out you go

(Child sneezes again)

on past the store. Raley's Store?

MT: mm-hmm.

GS: You know, it was down there. That's where the boats came in. And that's where we went to do work. And, you know, make some money.

(Woman's voice in the background, talking to about her pocket book)

Wasn't too much for us, but that's where my mother and all—they worked at [the Factory] too, see? But I—I became a barber. I cut hair until a year or two ago.

MT: *(over conversation between Wendy and C.S.)* What chores did you have to do when you were a kid?

GS: Oh!

MT: Farm chores?

GS: Oh, work! My Uncle, James Holly, he was a trucker.

MT: A trucker?

GS: Oh, yeah. You know, he grew vegetables.

MT: Yeah, a truck farmer.

GS: Yeah. He bought [an] old jalopy and he used to (my sister and my brother [who] was older than I was), he used to carry them around [to] sell vegetables. All the way up and down the highway, up [Route] 5. Saint Inigoes, all the places. And people would go buy.

(girl shouting)

And then my brother got married, and you know he wasn't married [yet] then. Then he took over, and I started driving. But I got experience, you know, from my uncle.

MT: Selling at stands or selling to stores?

GS: Oh, yes. All kinds of vegetables, yeah.

MT: Selling to people's homes or to stores?

GS: Oh, yeah. Homes, too. Hit all the houses on the highways. Get off the road and off the highway and go to the homes and sell it. And people look for you every year, once you started. And he wouldn't sell no bad food, you know. [He would] only sell good food. And he had a good business.

MT: So you did a lot of kinds of work when you were a child?

GS: Oh, yes, yes, yes. I done my share.

MT: So you kind of answered this one already: So [about] how your parents treated you, you said your uncle and all your relatives were very kind?

GS: Oh, well, my mother died when I was five, so she took care of us until then. And she lost her husband before I went with my uncle. [His name was] Alex Smith. He had some kind of sickness. Influenza, you know, all that was going around [in] those days.

MT: Yeah.

GS: Yeah. So people were dying. I made out. My mother, she wasn't very old, but I remember her.

MT: Do you remember ever getting disciplined for doing something you shouldn't be doing? How did you—how did you get disciplined?

GS: Well, my uncle—you know, we went with him. James Holly, a Christian man. I give him all the perks.

MT: Were you ever naughty?

GS: No, no. He didn't allow that.

MT: You were always good? *(Laughs)* Never had to be punished?

GS: No. I was afraid, you know.

GS: He didn't have no farm, but rented the land, you know. So, I worked for myself too, for practically all my life

MT: So you felt well prepared?

GS: *Oh*, yes. Yes I did. Yes I did.

MT: Now, what about your schooling? Where did you go to school? You said you went to—

GS: Right up here on the corner.

MT: In Scotland?

GS: Scotland School, elementary school.

MT: Uh huh.

GS: Then I went to Jarboesville. And that's up there—well, it's not called Jarboesville now.

MT: Is that by where the flattops are?

GS: It's over, not in the flattops, but over to your right.

MT: Where the base is now?

GS: Yeah. But it wasn't on the base. But it's the building before you get to the base. It looked like a barn at one time, you know. It was maroon. The color was red-like. And I went there. I was in my teens when I got there.

MT: Did that go through eighth grade or something like that?

GS: It went through eleventh grade, yeah. Eleventh grade. Then I went into the Army, you know. And they give you training too.

(sound of baby fussing and crying and woman's hushing her)

(to girl) What's the matter with you?

PS: She ain't got no clothes on.

GS: She ain't got no clothes on? *(hearty laugh)*

MT: Do you remember what your favorite subjects were, or favorite teachers were?

GS: Oh, yes. I had Ms. Meares, Ms. Bennett, Ms. Showers Oh yeah. It was a bunch of teachers. Every year or two, it seemed, you'd change teachers.

MT: What were your favorite subjects? Or what did you like least?

GS: Oh, mathematics. You know, arithmetic and all that. I was good at reading. I had to study hard to keep up with some of the rest of them. Now my brother, he was a little better than I was. I died just a couple of years ago. He lived up at the base. Her-

MT: *(interrupting)* Herbert? Oh, sorry.

GS: That's all right. I was just going to say he lived—he had a home up on Hermanville Road. That's where he lived in Lexington Park.

MT: What do you remember about your school room up at Scotland School?

GS: Oh ho ho, my *(laughs knowingly)*. It was good. The teacher's name there was Ms. Tyla Farrow (?). She came her up out of the city. She taught us. She taught me practically all the time 'til Ms. Bennett came. I can remember those teachers, you know, better than I can remember anything else. *(Laughs)* Yes, indeed. Well, I didn't have a very bad life. Sometimes I thought I was. Some fellows would get at me, they would throw stones.

MT: When you were back in school, at Scotland School?

GS: Oh, yes. Yes indeed. Yeah, they'd get after you, though. Bad boys.

MT: Why would they do that? Just because they were bad, huh?

GS: Yeah. Didn't have much supervision at home, not what [it] should have been, anyhow.

MT: Did you have a, like a wood stove, in your school in School?

GS: They had boys that would take care of that called Fire Makers. You know, some of them would come to school and light the fire in time. The older ones.

(sound of girl falling down and hitting the floor)

(to girl) Hey baby—get up your ass.

MT: Did you take your lunch with you, or what did you have for lunch?

GS: Oh yes. Take a biscuit *(laughing with girl closer to him)*.

Girl: Daddy.

GS: *(to girl)* Yeah, Daddy

(girl continues to say "Daddy" loudly in the background)

MT: When you were a young adult, what did you imagine you would be when you grew up? What did you dream of becoming? Even something—

GS: *(Inhales deeply)* I wasn't sure. I wasn't sure. You know, it takes a little time for you to really settle on one thing, you know.

MT: Well sometimes it's not something realistic, either. When you're a little kid, you say, 'Oh I want to be a---'. President or something.

GS: Oh, yeah, well. I don't remember what I (*laughs*). I tell you, my uncle used to work us so, you didn't have time to think about nothing else on the farm. Growing vegetables, you know. They were good to us, my brother and I. They were good people.

MT: So you didn't spend much time thinking about what you were going to be when you grew up?

GS: Not at that time, no, no, no.

MT: You were just—

GS: Yeah, just eating plenty of that good food, you know. Oh, we had that!

MT: That's the good thing about farm life.

GS: My aunt Ada, she was a good cook.

MT: Ada Smith?

GS: Ada Holly. They were my Holly family.

MT: She was James Holly's wife?

GS: That's right.

MT: Okay. So, when you became a teenager and interested in courting, did your folks let you court? Did they let you ask women out?

GS: Well, you know how that is. They'd have little 'Promenades,' they called it. All the girls and the parents would come out, something like a dance. But it's a shuffle, you know (*laughs to himself*). You'd walk down the floor, uh-huh. And you'd go to school and you'd meet people. And, I don't know how old I am; but my wife, I'm a little older than she is. But I never even saw her. (*Laughter*) She wasn't in no grade with me—I was before her. I believe we got married in 1921, something like that.

MT: Let's talk about that. So how did you meet each other?

GS: Oh. *(To wife)* Did you meet me or I meet you? *(chuckles)*

MT: You must have met each other.

Wife: We went to school together...

GS: Yeah *(sweetly)*. Well, you didn't go to school with me. I was ahead of you.

Wife: I know you was.

MT: Did you meet at church?

GS: Oh, church, yeah. We'd go to church. They had services there for the young children, teaching.

MT: Were you out on your own before you met your wife? For a while?

GS: Oh, yes, I was out of the farm.

MT: Was that after the Service, or before?

GS: Oh, no, that was before.

MT: That was way before. I was going to say, World War II [was well after that]. What did you do when you went out together? Did you go to clubs?

GS: Promenade!

MT: That was it?

GS: Yeah, 'Promenade,' they called it. You'd hold them by the hand, you know, then shuffle along, yeah *(laughs)*.

MT: Did you visit each other at each others' houses?

GS: Before we were married, yeah.

MT: Uh huh, before you were married—

GS: Yeah.

MT: You would go over to her house?

GS: Her parents (*my father-in-law and her uncle*), they had positions in the church. St. Luke's, the church out on the corner?

MT: Right.

GS: That's where we went, and we'd go for entertainment. Maybe listen to a sponsor, [or go to] a Promenade.

(Tape cuts off)

END of SIDE A

START of SIDE B

MT: So we were talking about the cake. And the Promenade.

GS: Yeah.

MT: So did your wife make good cake?

GS: Oh, yeah, she always could do that.

MT: Tell me right now, in front of her (*laughs*)

GS: [She could] make a good cake, yeah.

(Laughter)

MT: Okay, when you first went out on your own, were you living on your own before you got married? Or were you living at home?

GS: Oh, no, I was working at *(murmurs to his wife)* at St. Mary's City? Yeah. I worked at St. Mary's City.

MT: For the state?

GS: Yeah.

MT: Okay.

GS: You know, for a while there, Ms. France was there.

MT: *Oh (with sudden clarity)*, Ms. France. At the college?

GS: Yeah, at the college.

MT: What did you do there?

GS: I was a waiter on tables.

MT: Waiter? Mm-hmm. So, do you remember when that was?

GS: That was in the *(pause)* twenties?

MT: What year were you born?

GS: Me?

(He and wife mumble to each other. Guffrie sounds confused.)

G.S: [Nineteen] twenty-one, no. I was born...

MT: Yeah, it must have been around then, if you're seventy-eight now.

GS: See now, that's my problem. That's my problem, now. I just can't--

MT: Remember the dates?

GS: I just can't remember, since I've been sick.

MT: Listen, I can't remember dates now.

GS: No, I can't remember, see.

MT: So you must have been born then. In the 1920s, you were born. *(pause)*
So that was before the war that you worked at St. Mary's College?

GS: Before the war, yeah. I was a youngster then. I was in my twenties.

PS: *(to Merideth)* He means in the [nineteen] forties.

GS: No, no, I was in my twenties when I worked at St. Mary's City.

MT: Okay. Then you went in the war about nineteen forty-two.

GS: Yeah. *(to wife)* What was that, 'forty-two?

PS: Yeah.

GS: *(to wife)* We married in...[nineteen] twenty-one?

PS: *(to M.T.)* See, he can't remember.

MT: Must be a little later than that, yeah. Well, we can look up those dates. That's not such a
[problem].

GS: Sorry, I can't remember. As I get older...

MT: That's alright. Must be the late [nineteen] thirties, that you got married.

GS: Yeah.

PS: What?

MT: The late thirties, when you got married.

PS: No, no. We got married in [nineteen] forty-two.

MT: Oh, you got married in 'forty-two? *(To G.S.)* Right before you went to the war?

G.S. & PS: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, that's right

MT: Oh, so you got married and went over to the war right after you got married?

GS: Yes, yes we did.

MT: Oh, that must have been hard. Wow

GS: Yeah. Yes, sir *(laughs)*.

MT: Okay, now we got it. So you were working there, and what was the money situation like? Did you feel like you had enough money then, before you went to the war?

GS: Wasn't much money then. No, but I worked at St. Mary's City. That was one of the better jobs at that time. You know, at St. Mary's College. It was a good place. You know, you'd carry the food in to the girls and the students, then clean-up the place, the dining room and all that. Then you'd help them clean, sweep, or whatever. That's what I did.

MT: And then when you came back? When you came back from the war, what work did you start doing then?

GS: *(pause)* I don't [remember] *(pause, then to wife)* Can you tell her?

MT: Is that when you started the barber shop?

GS: I mean, yeah. I was a barber, yeah. *(To wife)* I went cutting hair, didn't I?

PS: No, you went to work on the [Naval] Base then.

GS: Oh, yeah, the Base. See, I just can't remember--

PS: He went to the base first.

GS: Oh, yeah. I was in the bus for forty-nine years.

MT: For how long?

GS: Forty—forty-seven years.

MT: Forty-seven years.

GS: Yeah, see—I had buses.

MT: So what did you do on the base?

GS: Well, I went there. I drove the bus on the base. Then I fired the boiler. That's how I built my home.

MT: Making the money?

GS: Yeah. I worked on the base, I sold wood, and I drove the bus. I had three jobs!

MT: Three jobs?

GS: That's right! That's the way I bought this place here, that place over there, the place down the road...

MT: Wow, you have three different properties?

GS: Yeah.

MT: Wow. So, once you came back you started working at the Base, then you got the barber shop and the buses?

GS: Yeah.

MT: So you felt like you were making a comfortable living, then, by doing those three jobs? And you were able to buy property?

GS: That's right. Yes sir.

PS: We were younger then. See, he can't remember. He had a stroke.

GS: I had a stroke and a bypass, yeah. But I'm coming back.

MT: I think you're doing real great, really. It's hard to remember all these things in sequence. Let's see, what haven't we talked about...(pause) Your wedding? Do you remember that?

(Guffrie defers to wife)

PS: Yeah, we just went to a pastor.

GS: Was it? Who married us?

PS: Reverend Medley.

GS: Oh, Reverend Medley.

MT: Do you remember how old she was?

GS: She was about forty.

(very loud laughter from C.S. and M.T.)

No, she was about eighteen.

PS: *(to G.S.)* And how old were you?

GS: I was twenty one.

MT: Good. Sounds very reasonable. Okay, let's see. We talked about how you met, so I don't know if you can answer this in front of your wife, but why did you decide to get married?

(Laughs)

GS: *(laughing)* Why? You know why!

MT: The usual reasons?

GS: *(Laughing)* Why? My babies! My babies coming!

MT: Oh, okay. Got to have babies. Did you have honeymoon?

(laughter from C.S. and G.S.)

GS: In the bed! *(pause)* No, it was nothing like that. Wartime, you know, was coming. There was no time to honeymoon then. Everybody's thinking about going into the Service, at my age.

MT: A lot of people did that after getting married. They met and marched on. Okay. Now, some questions about religion. I know you already talked about that some; you told us what church you went to-

GS: Methodist church.

MT: What did your church mean to you? What role does it play in your life?

GS: Everything. My uncle, he had a position in the church all his life. James Holly, and he was a Christian man. I never heard of him sinning or doing nothing, you know, unbecoming to a man. And he meant what he said.

MT: And the church was there at the center of your life as well?

GS: That's right. Yes, sir. St. Luke's Church, I'm right there now, every Sunday.

MT: And you never questioned your religion or your belief in God?

GS: No. They talk about that more than anything else. About God, and the way that you got to live in this world. If you take his guidance, you know, you'll live a long time.

MT: Seems to work well for you. Are there other community activities that you participate in, or did participate in? Like clubs, other than church activities.

PS: 4-H Club.

GS: Yeah, 4-H. I was in 4-H, a leader in 4-H, for years. Then I came up on the farm, and I had a chance to get around. That was one thing: he didn't keep us from going to things like that, you know. He didn't like that dancing and being radical, you know.

MT: So, 4-H. And any other clubs or social organizations?

GS: Well, I've been a singer in the choir in church all my life. As a youngster, we had a quartet, and we used to sing in church and all that, you know. Always on the good side with the people at the church, too.

MT: And you participated in the PTA?

GS: Oh, yes. I've been President of the PTA.

MT: *(pauses)* How do you feel about life in general here in St. Mary's County? In what ways is it different from the way it used to be, and is the quality of life better or worse now, and why?

GS: *(sighs)* I never had confrontations with people directly. I don't know any men that have bothered me in my life. Because I tried to treat everybody right, and that's the way I was taught from my uncle. To get along with them, [to] know what to talk about and all that. and that's helped me all along in my work and my going out and coming in. And I never had no problems.

MT: How do you feel about the way the county has changed?

GS: Oh, the county has changed! Well, there's more people, and that means more money. People can live better. You can make enough money to justify and take care of your family, then maybe start a home or finish a home, and that's all you can do.

MT: Are there any changes in the county over the years that you don't like, that you think aren't good?

GS: Well, people seem to be more pleasant right now, 'cause they make more money.

MT: Oh, it makes them more pleasant?

GS: Sure. [People would say] 'I'm gonna steal some hidden money,' you know. Back then people would steal to live. Back when I was coming along in the [nineteen] thirties, and before that, you know.

MT: Times were hard.

GS: Yes. Yes, but see, being on the farm, with all that canning all that food and all those things, and growing potatoes...[We'd have] a big pile of potatoes and didn't have any place to put 'em and we'd haul straw and pine chaff and kill the potatoes. Didn't have no place to put 'em, so we'd just cover them up with pine chaff.

MT: Chaff?

GS: Yeah, pine chaff. You know, off of those trees.

MT: And you'd just put it on the ground.

G.S: That's right. We'd just pile enough up on the ground, and keep them over the winter.

MT: What else did you keep over the winter?

GS: Oh, well everything that you could grow, we grew it. All kinds of vegetables. Corn [and] beans and all that. We even grew beans, and cut them off in the wintertime and shell them, you know? Yeah (*laughs*).

MT: So if you had to say what the biggest change is in the county over your lifetime, what would you say?

GS: Well, for everything, it's the base. It really brought us about, you know? People got more jobs, made more money, built more homes, and it's just continued to grow. It's good. And everybody just seems to be happy.

MT: That's good. What about race relations in the county? How have you seen that change? Has that changed for the better as well?

GS: Well, there's a little difference. Not with me, for I had good friends all my life. I stayed with white, black, brown; with all of them. So I never had no problems with getting along. No, I didn't.

MT: What about when your children were in school? Did they go to integrated schools or segregated schools?

GS: Integrated. I think the Catholics had a school; I suppose that was the only [Catholic] one around. And the public schools. So there were only two ways to go, and I went to the public schools. The one that's right there on the corner as you get out to the road, in that old trailer park there? That's mine; that's where I went to school.

MT: That's Scotland School?

GS: Scotland School, yes.

MT: I thought so. I recognized the schoolhouse.

GS: I got to re-do something out there, because it's about to go down.

MT: Yeah, to save it. I think it should be saved.

GS: Yeah, I think so too. Or try to get it going. Somebody said you could get help to do that, but I don't know.

MT: You should definitely look into that.

GS: Renovate it or something to make it look better. It's an eyesore there.

MT: How did black folks get their news in the county when you were growing up?
Newspapers, radio, television?

GS: Radio. That's the first thing that I know, when we got the news, we had the radio.
Televisions didn't come until later. We didn't have that.

MT: Did you get newspapers?

GS: Oh, yes. My family and my uncle. Ada, she could read like anything. People say she could pick up corn, and she could read so nice. Yeah, you could understand everything. And that's the way she brought us up, you know, reading.

MT: Do you get a paper now?

GS: Oh yes, we get a daily paper.

MT: Which one do you read?

GS: I read the Post, *The Washington Post*.

MT: Do you read a local paper? The *St. Mary's Today* or *The Enterprise*?

GS: Oh, yes, the *Enterprise* and the *Post* are the only two papers I get.

PS: I used to pick up that other paper (*referring to St. Mary's Today*).

MT: So people listened to the radio a lot for news, then; but also [read] newspapers.

GS: Yes.

MT: How were senior citizens treated when you were young?

GS: They called it 'the poor house'.

MT: What happened when they were too old to take care of themselves?

GS: They die (*laughs*).

MT: When people got too old to take care of themselves, what happened to them? Were they taken care of at home, or how—

GS: Parents took them in.

MT: Or else they went to the poor house, huh?

GS: The poor house. They had a poor house here.

MT: I know.

GS: They did, and people go there. It's up there right before you get to Leonardtown. It's on the left side of the road, I remember now, cause my uncle was a huckster. He'd sell all kinds of vegetables and stuff, and when I got old enough, I used to drive the car. an old

Chevrolet, and put the vegetables in the back. I'd sit in the front and haul them all they way up to the courthouse. And people would buy.

MT: What were people's attitudes about the courthouse around here?

GS: Nobody would like it, but it was the best you could do?

MT: Well, let's see. We've already talked about a lot of this, but how have you contributed to the county through your work (paid or volunteer), your family, your citizenship, your politics and your values? And what recognition have you received? Have you gotten more awards or certificates?

GS: Oh, I've gotten any certificates, but I haven't folded them or put them down or kept 'em like I should. I do have some around.

PS: What?

GS: (to C.S.) Certificates, you know.

PS: Oh, yes. He has those and trophies and plaques and things.

MT: Plaques and trophies? What have they been for [other than the] Purple Heart, first of all? You've gotten plaques and awards for [driving] the school bus?

GS: Oh, yes. I get that every year.

PS: P.T.A....Purple Heart...

MT: P.T.A.?

PS: Seems like a lot of things.

MT: Are there other ways you've contributed, you think, that we haven't talked about? Your children?

GS: Yeah, I've been all around with people. I mean, transportation all over the years. We had a car most of my life. I've been to all kinds of meetings and things. I've helped in many ways to make things better for the community in the county. Yeah.

MT: And you certainly had some very successful children, so that's to your credit.

GS: Oh, yes. This home here is from one of my children, Tubby

MT: The coach.

GS: Yeah, [he's a] coach. And then the others have done things too. I talk about this because this is the greatest *(laughs)*. He's the greatest child of all *(laughs)*.

MT: What do you consider the greatest thing you've ever had? Something you could not have done without in your lifetime?

GS: My wife.

MT: Great answer *(laughs)*.
(laughter from C.S.)

GS: I made pretty good money. Never was fired from a place. So I don't have nothing to complain to nobody about. They've treated me just right.

MT: Is there anything that you've wanted to do in your life that you haven't been able to do? If you had to live it over again that you'd do or change?

G.S: I don't think so. I've been progressed enough to be satisfied. I didn't expect to have what I have now, years ago. I kept on pushing, working night and day.

MT: All your jobs, yeah. Can you think of anything else? If you were going to share old stories about what life was like in the county, for you or your parents even, or your folks, your uncle and aunt, are there other things you can think of that we haven't talked about?

GS: Well, the worst time was before the war. But I was young then, you know. I didn't pay much attention to what was going on, other than I had a place to eat and sleep. But I

always felt that I had the better things to life, as I grew up. And my family, James Holly and Ada, they got me on the track, because my mother died when I was young, you know. She wasn't a terrible woman, but she had her faults like all the rest, I guess. Then I got with the Hollies, 'cause my mother was a Holly too. But I don't have no regrets now.

MT: That's great. Have you ever lived outside the county, except when you were in the Service?

GS: No.

MT: And you've taken trips?

GS: Everywhere. Within 300 miles, I guess. Schools and churches and all that. I let Wendy have the bus, now. She's gonna be an independent contractor.

MT: Oh, so you were an independent contractor with the schools, right?

GS: Yes, sir. Forty-seven years. I never had any problems.

MT: Well, I think we talked about just about everything. Oh, here's one: what about the teenagers in St. Mary's County today? Do they seem different?

GS: Well, the children now, they're more enlightened by the way they live. The things they need, their parents can give them, so it makes children better. See, back then, if you couldn't get it, you'd steal it. So people had to watch out for thieves as well as go to work. You hardly wanted to go to work sometimes, but that seems like it's passed away.

MT: So you're not worried about more violence now?

GS: No, no, no. I don't want to hear about that, I tell you the truth. Enough of that's going on, I guess, but the world is in good shape. It's better now than it's ever been. People and all.

MT: Not everybody feels that positive about it. That's good to hear.

GS: Well, I've had no problems. I've had nobody walk on me, smack me in the mouth or face. When I found out that something was getting out of line, I'd go.

MT: You'd get out of there.

GS: *(laughing)* Yeah.

MT: You never felt like you were a victim of a hate crime or anything like that.

GS: No, no. Mostly it was my people, you know. You know *(laughing)*, my colored people. There would be some problems.

MT: A little conflict?

GS: Yeah.

MT: Different values?

GS: Yeah. Something or other was wrong, but we got along fine. I never had a fight, a real fight. They'd push and shove, but never fight. Otherwise, I kept myself working, you know. I'd go home and go to bed, then get up and go to work the next morning. I didn't go out to the places where things would happen, [where people would] drink, and get going on.

MT: How did you feel about how you were treated in the Service?

GS: I was a staff sergeant, and I just led the men, mostly. I got along fine in the Service. I even got a promotion, but I didn't want it. I had enough [after] I got wounded and all. I said, "I don't want anymore."

MT: Okay.

(Tape cuts off)

END OF SIDE B

