

Hugh, Bob, and Gary Thompson
July 8 and 9, 1994

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Gary: Who's the oldest? I guess you're the oldest. Where were you born at? Where were you guys living when you were born?

Hugh: I forget...I think it was up at Grandpa Thompson's wasn't it? Grandpa and Grandma Thompson's house. Mom and Dad rented that. I think I was born at the old place, right on this side of the old home place (Wilmoth's). I don't know. I forget, but I do remember, you know this big house on the right, someone built right on top of the hill? I use to own that land. I remember when we lived there. I couldn't have been over three or four years old. I don't think Bob was born yet. We had a grate, and me and Mom, she went in and built a fire in the grate and she came in, she had a fur coat, well, it wasn't a fur coat but it looked like fur, probably artificial, hung it on the back of the chair. Well, I was poking in the fire, and after a while the poker got red hot clear up to there, so I turned it around, some way or another, and got her coat on fire! So, buddy, I'm tellin' you, I hated that. It burned every bit of it. So I put the poker up beside the, you know, the fireplace.

Gary: What did Grandma do?

Hugh: She screamed and she hollered, but she never whipped one of us boys, as I ever remember. My dad, now buddy, he'd put it on you, but I don't ever remember my mother whippin' any of us boys. You know, a few days, a few weeks before she died, I was up there and I said "Mom, how many boys you got?" She said, "Five." I said, "I'm the third one down." "Yeah" I said, "Was I the orneryest one in the bunch?" She said, "I think so!" And she just grinned! But she had a nice place up there, I want you to go up there and see that place.

Gary: Yeah, I'm going to go up.

Hugh: You can see yourself in the floor.....it's his turn! (pointing to Bob)

Gary: The old home place, you mean.

Hugh: Where Mom was....she loved it there. They had her up at the hospital in Elkins, we said "Mom, you want to go back home?" She said, "Yeah, I want to go back to the Good Samaritan." They treat you real good. Slim Bolton is up there now, do you know him? Well, I don't know whether I'm goin' to go there. I might go to Washington, DC in the old soldier's home.

Gary: No, you're goin' to Alaska!

Hugh: Maybe someday.

Gary: We'll get you up in Alaska and you won't be able to leave, because you have to get on an airplane to leave, so.....

Hugh: ...airplanes? That's left up to the boss, my wife.

Gary: I keep telling him he needs to spend the hottest part of West Virginia in Alaska, and then go to Hawaii in the winter. He don't seem to want to leave West Virginia for some reason.

Hugh: Bob, I'm telling you the truth, we had a good time down in Honolulu. Janet bought me three shirts, and we went clear from one end to the other. We were in Honolulu. They live in Honolulu.....

Gary: They live right out of Honolulu....about 30 miles, I think Janet said.

Hugh: We seen that big cemetery.....we got pictures of the National Cemetery.

Gary: Do you remember Pop? When I was a kid they talked about Pop a lot but I don't remember him. I remember Pap Pap real well.

Hugh: We use to go out there....well, we were cuttin' filth over the hill, John Jones was helpin' cut it. We tried to clean up a place over there. Well we did get a place cleaned up and we put it in potatoes. And we'd go in every noon, at noon we'd eat a big supper, Dad, Mom and them would have a big supper, and Grandma Ella.

Pop would take us up there. We'd have to take turns turning this here crank to turn the grindstone to sharpen the scythes. He was something else.

Gary: Did he have horses? I think I remember that.

Hugh: Oh yeah, he had Pat and old...one we called Bill. Dad doubled up with him one time, and her name was Pat. She was a white horse and old Bill was a black one. I never did like that old Bill. Me and Gearl would be a plowin' over there, we rented a piece of corn ground off of Ray Regester. I would drive a little bit, and Gearl would drive a little bit and I'd plow a little bit. I wasn't very big. We'd get to the end of the turn and we'd have to click that lever on the plow, raise it up in the air, it automatically turns, you see, then turn the same furrow. It wasn't the land side, it was the hill side. I remember one time old Pat, she done all the work, she was way ahead all the time, and old Bill was always laggin' behind. I shouldn't a did this, but I got me a sassafra switch about that long, and I put a needle, or one of those straight pins in it. When I was drivin', every time he'd start lagging behind, going half way to sleep, I'd punch him! Right in the rear, ya know! Boy, he'd get up there! Well, after about two or three minutes, we'd get clear across the field, and he'd get behind. I'd hit him again! I'll never forget. I always hated that horse, I don't know why. Pop had an old log barn up there and he'd raise homemade tobacco. Well, I'd slip out there, and he'd put his tobacco up there in this barn, hang it up there. Big leaves, about that long. I'd go out there and I'd get me two or three and I'd take it home. I'd wind it up like that and run it through Mom's sieve, and then I'd roll 'em. I didn't care what kind of paper it was, newspaper or anything....it's a wonder I hadn't died, but I rolled cigarettes.

Gary: How old were you then?

Hugh: I couldn't be over five or six. I smoked ever since.....I smoked 66 years!

Gary: You don't deserve to be alive today!

Hugh: You know, sometimes I wonder about that. Why in the heck am I still livin'?

Gary: Same reason that Grandma said, you were the ornery one, probably! Too ornery to die!.....So he kept his tobacco out in the barn, huh?

Hugh: And I'd take it out there, I'd steal a couple leaves of it every day. Old Bill....they had a log barn and Grandpa Thompson had put boards up against right where his feet was because he had a habit of kickin'. Oh, you could hear it all over the country! So he had big plank boards 'bout like that. I got up in the attic one day and I said, "You son of a gun, I'll fix you!" And now I hope someone will forgive me for this, but I stuck a pitch fork down there and I'd hit him in the rump once. And man, I'm tellin' you he'd kick with both feet! And when he hit those boards, man, I'm tellin' you, you could hear it, that son of a gun!

Gary: Well, he was ornery, wasn't he!

Bob: I think Mom was right!

Hugh: I always liked to smoke, I don't know why. I would steal out two eggs a day off of Grandma and Grandpa Thompson, and we had some chickens and I'd steal up a couple there and in about five or six days I had a dozen eggs and I'd go down to Shockey's over there, they had an old country store, remember that Bob? Old Burr Shockey? I'd go in there and I'd get me a pack of RJR.

Gary: That's tobacco?

Hugh: Uh-huh. Had a little draw string on top, RJR. So I had a little bag of that RJR and I was goin' to school up there. I don't know how old I was. Mable Wilson, no not Mable.....what was that woman, I told her

Bob: Miss Ethel Harris.

Hugh: Miss Harris. We was up under the school house, had a hole in the school house bottom where you could go back under the floor and smoke. One of 'em, Dorothy Lee Coberly.....or Dora Lee Stalnakercame in and said, "Hey, Hugh, you better put that cigarette out. Here comes Miss Harris." And I thought she was kiddin'! I said, "The hell with Miss Harris! If she fools with me, I'll knock her on her head!" And I

looked back there, and damn it! there she was standin' there!! Well, I wasn't about to go back in that building. It was noon hour. So, I took off and I came over through Charlie Bartlett's hill, and Hubert Tolbert and Myrtle lived up here on old Charlie Doodle's place, Charlie Poling. I kept asking Myrtle every once in a while, "What time is it? What time is it?" Well, I knew for the fact that I was goin' to get a trimmin' and I figured, "Now, if I wait long enough until Bob and William and Gearl and them get out of school, I'll go in and I'll meet 'em down there and I'll walk in. Maybe they don't know I skipped school!" Oh boy, that didn't work. That didn't work. Boy, I got it then!

Gary: So how did they find out?

Hugh: I forget exactly. Do you remember?

Bob: Oh, I was the one who told 'em!

Gary: Somebody told on you, then, huh?

Hugh: The funniest thing about it, me and him and William were going to school up there.....oh yeah!...and Alma Shockey, she was the principal. So I finally went back to school the next day and I put 'bout three or four pairs of pants on, and I put a big paste board in my britches and walked in there. Alma Shockey said "Everyone's excused but Hugh, I want to talk to him." Well, they went out and I was sittin' there. Oh boy, she told me off! Then I thought, "Well, boy, this is my punishment". Well the next day, I went to school, and I didn't have those pants on, and Mrs. Shockey said, "Hey, everyone's excused but Hugh. Miss Harris wants to see him in the other room." And I went in there and I'm tellin' you! she had a paddle that long, big holes bored in it, and she turned me across her knee, oh man! I'm tellin' you, that hurt!!! They's the ones told 'em I had two or three pairs of pants on cause I was expectin' a whippin', ya know. Well, those were the good old days, weren't they?

Gary: How old were you when you got the whippin' for that?

Hugh: Well, I was in the big room. Fourth grade went in the big room?

Bob: Fifth.

Hugh: Fifth. I must have been in fifth or sixth. I was pretty big by then, wasn't I? I was big enough to know better.

Gary: What school was that? Was that over at Point Pleasant?

Hugh: Point Pleasant. I never forget the time Shorty Stalnaker, remember old Shorty? Big, tall, ya know, and I was sittin', this was in the small room, I was sittin' in about the fourth seat, and old Shorty Stalnaker, you know him, we used to play ball?

Gary: Little League?

Hugh: He was your coach. He had the job of janitor, taking care of the stove, keeping the place heated, he'd sweep it out and dust off. He came in there and said, "Hugh, come here." I said, "No, I can't". "No, come on!" And I jumped out of my seat and started back there to see what he was going to say and it didn't go too good!.....You know my first teacher? At Mt. Liberty? Can you remember us when we lived at Jake Wilmoth's place. We'd walk across that hill.....Well, maybe you didn't, Bob, but I did. Gertrude Griffith and me and William. I don't think he was old enough yet. Anyway, Gertrude Griffith give me my first whippin'. Fax Murphy gave me one at Union.

Gary: Sounds like you got a lot of 'em! I mean, your first whippin', you said that was your first teacher, so that was your first year in school, right?

Hugh: Yeah, I was in first grade....and Hobart Shaffer, now he was sittin here, and he was pretty good back in those days, by heck, he was about 15 or 16 years old and still in grade school.....I don't now how old he was, anyway, Gertrude.... someone knocked on the door, the school house door, and she went to the door, opened up, and she was talkin' to this person. I don't remember who it was, but she come back, and Hobart had us all a'laughin'. And I'm tellin' you the truth, I felt sorry for Hobart. Gertrude went up there and got some switches

and started beatin' him over the back. He only had a little old shirt on, and he wouldn't cry. Gertrude Griffith said, "I'll whip you till you do cry". By heck, Hobart never did cry. I bet you she whipped him five or six times. I always felt sorry for him for that.....old Gertrude Griffith. I guess she was my first school teacher at Mt. Liberty. I remember I was in the first grade, is that what you call the primer? Anyway, I done something wrong and she said, "Now everyone's going on a picnic, and a hike, a walk, everyone but Hugh." She made me sit there in that little seat by myself! I forget what I did, but evidently she didn't like it!

Gary: That was Mt. Liberty? You first went to school in Mt. Liberty?

Hugh: Mt. Liberty, then I went to Valley Dell two or three times, no two times, Point Pleasant once, I guess. But when I went to Valley Dell down there, I was just a little fellow. We'd walk over the hill here, and Madge Fisher, June's wife, and Zeffie Poling down there. Well anyway, Onie Phillips was teaching school and he was at the blackboard and I was doing something like that, and I was settin' right behind Madge and Zeffie Poling and I was punching 'em or something. He turned around and seen me, "Hey!" At that time some of the seats were about that wide. "You like them girls?" I said, "Why not?" He said, "How would you like to sit with 'em?" I said, "Ah, I don't like that." He said, "You get up there!" He made me sit between my sister-in-law, (wasn't my sister-in-law then) and Zeffie Poling! Ah, man! Hey, it's his turn!

Gary: Bob, what do you remember about all these rotten things the old man did?

Bob: (laughing) I remember a little bit about it. Of course, Hugh was talking about Jakey Wilmoth's place, that was the place over where Winemiller used to live. The old house that burned.

Gary: Yeah.

Bob: Dad built that house there. Dad owned all that in there.

Gary: I can just barely remember that. Wasn't there a fence around that? Out by the barn? We built the pond, and then there was a barn, it was kinda over in here.

Bob: But the house was burned Down. Francis Winemiller came up there and built another house. But the old house had burned down. Dad built it and dug that big well out there in the front, too. I just remember living there, I was only about four years old. We moved up there to where we live now, to where the old place is now. I think I was four years old when we moved from over here to where Dad built the other house. I just barely remember, I think it was 1932, or 1930. 1931 or '32 Dad built that house up there, didn't he? If it was '32 I must have been six years old.

Hugh: I wasn't very big, I helped Dad build that. I remember.

Bob: I remember living over there, just barely remember.

Hugh: Do you remember when we dug that well? We got across the hollow, there was a wet weather spring over there, we'd get water over there till Dad started digging that well. It's still over there! Locked up.

Bob: Yeah, I know that well's still there, but I don't remember when we dug it.

Hugh: I remember when we were living there and the place burned down.

I remember when we dug the well at the last home place. I was just ten years old. Dad and I down and we drilled a hole. I got out and Dad set the charge. He started up the ladder.... there was a fuse about that long, black powder is what it was. He lit the fuse and he started up the ladder and he fell back down, and oh my gosh, when he got to the top that thing went off and I'm telling you, there were stones that big around. Rocks flew out and hit the roof. We had to patch the roof. It's a wonder he hadn't got killed.

Bob: That's the house we lived in up there, the other place.

Gary: Up at Mt. Liberty?

Bob: Yeah.

Hugh: Dad was good at that. He helped wall that well up over there where Pete Collier lives now. It's only about that big around. Pop and Dad, they'd go down there and they would be down there 10-15 minutes and then they would have to come back out to get air, there was "black damp" (methane gas) there. They'd take turns. They were only allowed in there so long cause there was no air.

Gary: Where did you go to school first, Bob?

Bob: Point Pleasant was my first school.

Gary: Now did they just not build one at Mt. Liberty and Valley Dell?

Bob: They were there, but the reason I guess, I always heard that the reason we had to go to Point Pleasant when we lived at the old home place is because that is in Barker District. Mt. Liberty and Valley Dell are located in Philippi District. That was the reason, cause the last year that I went to Point Pleasant, the school bus was going by my house and I could have rode to Mt. Liberty or Valley Dell either one, but I wasn't allowed to because it was in the Philippi District and I had to walk to Point Pleasant. Of course, I was glad of that because I didn't want to change schools any how. I would rather have walked to Point Pleasant than I would have changed schools. When it comes to changing schools it's a little hesitant in getting acquainted, you know, and you feel inferior to other people, and I mean I've known families even in my teaching, families that were moving from house to house, maybe three or four times a year. This is not good for the children that are attending school because one school isn't carried on in the same individual way as the other school. But we had to move a couple of times, because we had to move down to Grandma Daugherty's a couple of times to take care of her, and then that put us in the Union school. I always wished I was back to Point Pleasant, you see, my old home school. It does make a difference to kids that's growing up, in changing schools so often, because it's hard for them to get adjusted. Well, how would you like to change jobs every six weeks? You see what I mean. Going on a new job is hard for you to get on to. It's just hard to get adjusted.

Now, I was born down at Ethel Andrick's in the Union area, in an old store building there on Ethel Andrick's side of the road, right across from where Ronnie Ketchum lives, in the old Roy Phillips place.

Gary: Is that right in a turn down there?

Bob: Right at the foot of the hill below Russell Jones. It was on one of the sides there, and I think we must have lived there a couple of times. William was born there, also. There's where we were born, and then, I guess we moved up to where Dad built the house over here.....yeah, we were down there in 1935.

Hugh: I think I went to school at Union when we lived at Joshua Bartlett's place.

Bob: Well you did. Joshua Bartlett moved to Brownton one year. They rented their house to Dad and Mom. You and Gearl and June went to Union that time.

Hugh: We walked clear down there?

Gary: Bob, do you remember Pop?

Bob: Oh yeah, I remember Pop real well. Pop was just 60 years old when I was born. I remember he would get out there and help us hoe corn. I remember one time when we working hoeing corn, we were hoeing corn for Ray Register, on the farm there. We were way back around the hill, there, next to the Mouse Run Road, hoeing corn. Oh, it was hot! And that evening when we came in for supper we ate at Ray's, and my Grandpa Thompson was so tired and crampy, he was just too tired to eat. So at that time, I must have been about ten years old, he would have been 70 years old, see, out there hoeing corn in that hot sun all day at 70 years old. I'll never forget that. Another time, I remember, we had that big field over there where it is growing up now, in wheat, and Ray and Lona Register had moved up here on the hill from over on the Middle Fork River. So, we all decided, Ray and Lona wanted everybody to go over there on the 4th of July. So, we had no way to go other than they hired Fred Simpson, Gilbert's boy, to take them over there on the truck. Well, Gilbert said that each man that went, or each boy that was big enough to work, old enough to work, either had to give him a dollar or cut crops one day, the whole day. So I remember that Dad said, "Well, we'll go if the wheat is cut." As well as I remember Brance Thompson was cradling, John Jones, and Ray. And, I knew that we were going to go swimming in the river over there and I didn't have a bathing suit. So I took an old sweater and made me a bathing suit. I was afraid that somebody else would get a hold of that bathing suit when we went over there the

next day on the 4th of July, and take it, and I wouldn't get to use it! And I wore that thing all day in that wheat field, as hot as it was, with my clothes over top of it!

Hugh: We were binding wheat.

Bob: I was afraid somebody would get that bathing suit, and when I came in that evening, started to pull that off where that old fuzz and stuff was on that sweater, it stuck to me! But we did get to go to the Middle Fork River because we got the wheat cut. So the next day Fred came along with his truck, and Ray and Lona went, Grandma and Grandpa Thompson went, Edmund and Winnie, and Dale and Roma, Hubert Tolbert and Myrtle Tolbert, Dad and Mom and all of us boys, five of us. So that was a pretty good load! It was raining, and we rode the back of that truck, big ton truck, all the way to Middle Fork. Then we had a flat tire! And they had to stop and change that tire. That must have took an hour to change the truck tire. I think it was on the back. Maybe, on the inside, too. It had the dual wheels. Had to stop and change that tire. By the time we got over there, I don't know what time it was, but they spread their lunch out there on the ground someplace and we all ate. Then we went to the river. Me and my little bathing suit! I remember Denzel, though, he was about my size. He didn't have a bathing suit, they made him go naked, and then they pulled him up out of the water. Didn't make Denzel mad, after he was swimming a while!

Gary: Denzel was Edmund's son?

Bob: Yeah. It was quite a time.....Hugh's speaking of cutting brush and filth back there with the scythes. We had the whole farm cleaned up with scythes. There wasn't any brush on it what so ever, only maybe just a few trees around where there might have been a little woodland. Now it's hard to even get a jack rabbit to get through. But, we used to raise wheat and corn and everything in there every year.....yes, Fisher's had the mill down there. Herman Fisher ground the wheat and corn, and Herman wouldn't even shut down for lunch. He ate breakfast and supper when he was grinding at the mill. He skipped lunch, he'd grind all day. I have seen wagons and horses lined up almost half way up to Merle Golden's waiting to get their wheat ground. He never charged any money for doing this. What he did was if you took in a bushel of wheat to have ground into flour, he'd take a couple of gallons out of it for his toll. Then when the day would come when he was up with his custom grinding, he would grind this for himself, and then he would sell the flour and corn mill to people that

didn't have it, didn't raise wheat. And if you would go there, Gary, and didn't have the money to buy a sack of flour, you couldn't buy it from him, he wouldn't charge it to you. No way! Flour was about 65 cents a bag from what I can remember. But what he would do, he would say, "You go over to the house and Dora will give you 65 cents, and come back over here and give it to me, and then you can have the flour." But you see what he was doing, he didn't want to fool with those books. Now that was Herman's idea of not fooling with books and records. And when you paid back, you had to take the money back over to the house and give Dora the 65 cents. You see, he was finished with it, he was clear of it. So if any losers came along, why he was still in the clear, but Dora would be the loser! But I don't think very many people ever took advantage of them. I remember, I heard Mom say one time that we were out of wheat. Didn't have any flour, and probably didn't have any money. And she said Bruz Lantz had been at the mill and had some wheat ground and he found out something about this, and Bruz Lantz, when he took his flour he left a bag of flour for the Thompson family. Now things were rough then. If you had a dime in your pocket or a quarter, or a fifty cent piece, that looked as big around as a wagon wheel.....things were cheap, you could buy soup beans for \$4.00 a hundred pounds, but getting the \$4.00! Dad worked on WPA, what they called the Worker's Progress Administration during the Depression, it was under Roosevelt, for \$17.60 every two weeks. \$35.20 a month. He worked three days a week, and then there was another group came in and worked three days a week. Every two weeks you got a check for \$17.60 and that came by mail. The foreman didn't pay you on pay day at the job site, it came by mail. And here we would sit waiting on that check, and if the check didn't come, so we could go get some groceries. I remember we had to make a trip to Belington one time. The check didn't come and we went to the Belington Post Office, we were on the Belington route at that time, and asked if the check was in. And the clerk at the Post Office wouldn't hand that check out to us! It was there, and he says "You'll have to go up and get the mail carrier, Mr. Bartlett, to come down here to this Post Office, and he'll issue the check." We had to make a trip to Laurel Mountain Road to get him to come down to give us that check. The Postmaster would not hand us that check. For what reason I don't know, maybe he already had his mail put up in a certain area for the next day's run, and he didn't want to mess with it. But the Postmaster can do anything, he's in charge. He should have gone back there and given us that check. We shouldn't have had to run to Laurel Mountain Road to get the mail carrier to come down there to give us that check!

Gary: How did you get up there? Did you have a car?

Bob: Well, we had an old car, a '30 Chevrolet, and we were lucky enough that we had the money to put two gallons of gasoline in it to go. Course, gasoline was cheap at that time, you could buy 5 gallons for a dollar. Oil was 10 or 15 cents a quart. Tires were \$8 or \$9 a piece. But still, that came hard.

Hugh: Do you remember when Charlie Bartlett used to deliver mail on a horse? He'd ride a horse clear from Wade Everson's at Point Pleasant to Mount Liberty. He'd carry a big box from Aunt Gladys, toys and clothes and shoes.

Bob: I think I have that in what I sent Gary about Christmas in 1935, about the stage coach going. You already have that, don't you?

Hugh: He'd go down through and come up by Virgil Wagner's place, and through Mount Liberty, and back by our place.

Bob: Yeah, he'd come down across, through East Bend, and down the old road and come out down at Mt. Liberty. Then he'd come out by our house and over to Griffith's. Then he'd come down the Mouse Run Road, and come out over at Gordon Knapp's garage. But, I as say, times were rough. I remember one time when I started to high school. I needed a pair of gym shoes, they were for a gym course, and I didn't have any money. The shoes were 65 cents and that's all they cost. But I didn't have the 65 cents....Dad didn't have 65 cents. So Emerson Poling (the old Trimble place) down here was thrashing, and he hired me to help thrash and just exactly when he paid me that evening, just a coincidence that I had earned 65 cents for helping him thrash, and that's exactly what my gym shoes cost. So see, I couldn't take my money out here and spend it for pop and candy. It had to go right back in to buy myself something. A lot of kids, if they worked out here for a farmer, they'd take their money and they'd go spend it on candy and pop. I wasn't allowed to do that. If I made a quarter some place, I probably, when I got home would have to go to the store and buy a couple pounds of sugar.

Hugh: You would work on the railroad.

Bob: And kept Dad and Mom.

Hugh: You were a junior...didn't you quit school once?

Bob: No, I didn't quit. One year when I was a junior in high school I got a job on the railroad. I was seventeen years old, and I worked all summer. When school time come, September, I said I'm not going back to school, I've got a good job. I'm making \$5.28 a day. So I worked and worked up till November. I decided to myself, "Well, Mom and Dad didn't give me much encouragement about going back to school." Because if you got a high school education back in those days, you were lucky.

Hugh: We weren't expecting that.

Bob: You weren't expecting it. You expected to go to the eighth grade and maybe drop out and that was it. Well, I decided I better go back to school. I sat down and wrote the principal, Mr. Carpenter, a letter to see what I could do. This was in November, right after Armistice Day. He wrote a letter back and he said that if I would come back to school and take two subjects the rest of that first semester, and make my back work up in those, and then in the second semester I would take six solid subjects with no study halls, then I could graduate with the class. And that's exactly what I did. Then, after high school was over, I went back and got a job on the railroad again. And then I knew that if I got my diploma, I could go to college anytime I wanted to if I could ever afford to do so. So, I worked on the railroad awhile, then went to the old Chevrolet garage in Philippi, worked there a while. Then, I went to Akron and worked a while. I started to Broadus in 1947 but didn't have the money to continue. I only went a week or so, and had to drop out because of finances. Then I ended up, I worked with the maintenance crew at the school building and I decided when I was working on these buildings (at one time there were 72 school buildings in Barbour County), I decided when I was working for the school board that if I can work on these buildings, I can work in them. If ever I get a chance to go to college I want to teach. And then after I left the maintenance crew with the school board I went to Southern States. I was assistant manager at Southern States for a couple of years. I left there and got a job driving a school bus, in order to go to school. Drove a school bus two weeks and one evening the transportation supervisor stopped me and he said, "Bob, this is your last run this evening." I said, "Why?" He said, "They turned you down in Charleston on your physical examination." There I was without a job at the school board or the Southern States. Delma was pregnant with Debbie. So I went to Ohio, and worked out there. I worked at Goodyear

Aircraft. I had an interest in this old store up here at Mt. Liberty with Russell. Russell got sick, he wrote me a letter and told me I'd have to do something with the store. So, I worked out a notice and come home and bought Russell's share of the store. I ran it a while. I bought Russell out, I ran the store a while, and then I sold the store. One evening, Brooks Griffith was driving the bus also, now this was in February, which I had left the school board in October, I believe, driving the bus. So, Brooks Griffith stopped out at Mt. Liberty there and told me, he said, "The transportation supervisor said there was a bus driver that quit, and that you'd been off long enough, and you were eligible if you wanted to take another physical, and if you pass it, and pass your driver's test, the job is yours." So, I went down. The school board hired me, I took the physical, I took the driver's test and passed. Then I started to college. I'd go to college, Alderson-Broadus in Philippi, between bus runs, and drive to Fairmont on Wednesday nights through the summer. Finally, I got enough hours to teach in one room schools, which was 64 hours, that was two years of college. I went out and taught three years, and I got a leave of absence from teaching, got a job driving the bus again, and I went back to finish school. In the meantime I also worked at Philippi Hardware, too. I worked at Philippi Hardware part-time, drove the school bus, going to school and tried to run the farm. And Mr. Snyder didn't want me to go teach when I was ready to teach. He wanted me to stay at the Hardware. He says, "I'll pay you as much as you are making teaching." I said, "Well, it was a hard time and a long time getting this certificate. I think I better try it." He says, "That will be fine, but any time you get discouraged with teaching, you've got a job here." So I still continued to work for him on Saturday and through the summer, Christmas vacations. One time during Christmas vacation Mr. Snyder said, "Bob, how much do you make teaching?" Now this was about 10-12 years after I began teaching. He said, "How much are you making?" I told him. He said, "I can match that if you want to quit." And the day he found out I retired, about a week, I got a call from him to come in and work.

Gary: Never gave up, did he?

Bob: He never gave up! I went down and talked to him and I said I can't work full time. He said, "How about three days a week?" "Well, that will be fine." Then I decided, "Nah, I'm getting old." So I called him and I said, "Do I have to stick to that?" He said, "No, Bob. You don't have to make that commitment if you don't want to. Maybe I shouldn't have even called you." I said, "I'll tell you what I'll do. If you let me off under that commitment, anytime ever you need any extra help, you let me know." He said, "That's good enough for me." Then, I went back to work for him part-time, even after that! But I never did go back full time. It was a long hard struggle.

Gary: Doesn't sound quite the way it is today, that the parents pay the kids all the way through school and then sometimes we still have a hard time.

Bob: That's right. I know I've experienced this, being in school and baking and paying your own way and seeing kids in there that have all kinds of money, and money sent to them, see, and there's a difference. Quite a difference. I remember one time when I was principal at the Belington Junior High. I had a little trouble with a boy, he wasn't attending school very well. This is more less a joke. I called him in the office and was talking with him. Well, he said, "Mr. Thompson, I really don't mind school too bad. It's just the principle of the thing." The "principal" and he were laughing together --- "it's just the principle of the thing." "Oh, I didn't mean it that way!"

Hugh: Bob, do you remember how bowlegged William was? William was just about this high, and Evelyn Daugherty stayed with Mom when he was born, you see. What do you call them? Well, anyway, she stayed with Mom and helped out when he was born. And Evelyn used to laugh, and we had a little dog, her name was "Queen". She was about this high, but she was about that big around, and William would be walking across the floor to talk to Bob. We had a little wagon, Bob was in this wagon. And she said, "Absolutely now, I saw that dog run right between William's legs and he didn't know nothing about it!" They said William was the most bowlegged kid that ever lived. Maybe he was a little heavy, you know, when he started walkin', and his legs bowed out.

Gary: Bob, who had the biggest influence on you? I know a lot of our relatives, I think, were teachers. Going through the family tree, are several of them teachers?

Bob: Well, its a little hard to make a decision, but there were several teachers that had an influence on me and I...actually when I was in about second or third grade I thought I would like to be a teacher because, I'll tell you the reason why, because teachers were making good money at that time, whereas Dad was working on WPA for \$35.00 a month, and teachers, some of them were getting, now this was back in the '30's, some of them were getting \$125.00 a month, you see. And that sort of influenced me. Teachers not always got paid good, because I have an old book back in 1800's that there were about five different teaching certificates that you

could receive and they had different categories. I think the highest one was only \$35.00 a month, which that was real good money back in the late 1800's and early 1900's. But I guess I'm not wanting to put out any particular teacher that had the most influence on me. But, there was a lot of them that had an influence on me, and I know that I had some good teachers. Especially in my elementary schools. They were very concerned. I remember my teacher gave us an award when we learned to count to 100. She would give us a pencil. Boy, I worked and worked hard. Finally I made it! I'll never forget that pencil. Great big eraser on top of it. I'd see those pencils on her desk every day and if another student got one I thought, "I'll get mine tomorrow!"

I remember once when it was a very bad day - snowing and blowing. It was Valentine's Day. They weren't going to let me go to school it was so bad. I had not missed a day all year, and I kept on and kept on, and Dad and Mom said I could go if William would go with me. So William decided, he didn't have school that day, that he'd go with me. So we beat it out, and we walked to Point Pleasant. William was the postmaster, we had the valentines in a big box, and he passed the valentines out. That evening when we left the school, Pearl Moore, Pearl Everson at that time, was the teacher, and George and Jess Everson, and William and I walked in front of Pearl to break the road so she could follow us. In time the snow had that pass blown back over. When we got down as far as Uncle Wade's Pearl said, "You boys are going over to the house, and you are going to warm before you start on home, and I'm going to open up something, some green beans." Pearl opened up some green beans, and Pearl said, "You boys are going to get something warm in your bodies before you leave here." So she opened up some green beans and cooked them and we ate some warm food. Then we started, and we got to the top of the hill there above where Pete Collier lives now, and we were three times, at the top of the hill the wind was blowing so bad it would take our breath, and we would have to run back down in, duck behind the bank again. The third time we said, "We're going over this time!" and we did! And then that same evening, where June and Hugh had spent the same day with Roma Thompson, they had taken Roma to the doctor. They couldn't get in. They had to leave the car set in there some place, and they were afraid the battery would freeze up on it so Hugh put the battery in an old feed sack and carried it home! But, Pearl Moore had a lot of influence on me when it came to teaching.....and Delma had a lot of influence on me, because she was a teacher, too, see, and she influenced me a lot of times.

Gary: Have any students that you considered kind of high points, that you felt like you influenced? I know you influenced a lot of them.

Bob: Oh yes! I do!

Gary: You influenced me, you taught me how to hit a ball. I got educated, too, but I remember that especially!

Bob: I've had some that's failed and I've had some that gone on to places.....the thing of it is.....some have been convicts, of course, I guess that's society.....I was very strict, but I was fair. I was firm and I've had kids that I've put the paddle on, meet them up there on the street and they'll come up and shake hands with me and say "Boy, I'm kinda glad you did that to me! You did me some good!" I didn't do it for mistreatment, I did to try to correct them instead of trying to be an old meanie.....I've had several of them that now I'm going to for advice! Jim Fridley, remember him? He was at Valley Dell. Well, now he's principal at Kasson. And when he was teaching, he taught under me when I was principal at Belington, there was something I was working on concerning Math and I went to Jim because Jim was a Mathematician. He studied Math, and I went to Jim on advice on how to work the problem, after I had taught him down there at Valley Dell how to multiply and subtract! But later I had to go back to him on advice on working out a problem which was more complicated, things of this nature. And as I say, I went to school under Miss Pearl Everson, Mrs. Pearl Moore now, as a 7th and 8th grade student. Later I became her principal, she taught under me at the Belington Junior High. So this is how things worked out. But, it was a hard row. If I had it to do over, I guess I would do it again.

Hugh: I remember when you lived in Ohio and taught school out there.

Bob: Kenneth McDaniel, John Michael, Carolyn Michael, and Delma.... they were at the same school I was in Randolph, Ohio, fifteen miles East of Akron, Ohio.

Hugh: I don't think you would remember when we were in school at Union and I got in trouble with Eddie Daugherty. Now, the 4th grade, they were still in the little room? Well, anyway, Fax Murphy, I'll never forget him, he was up at the blackboard doing something and I was setting about four seats behind Eddie Daugherty. Eddie Daugherty didn't have no books. He said, "Hugh, how 'bout giving me your 4th grade geography." Remember 4th grade geography, Bob? I said, "Okay, here it is," and I slid it up the aisle to him. He grabbed it.

Fax Murphy turned around and he seen it. He said, "Come here!" I got a whippin' every time I went to school! He went in the cloak room and he brought out a switch about like that, and he give me one, I mean tell you! I didn't cry, and I think that's what made him mad because I didn't cry. He said, "Just wait a minute." He wore that switch out, and he went in the cloak room and got another one, brought it out, and he really gave me one that time. I didn't cry, though!

Bob: I remember at Point Pleasant school, Gertrude, Griffith at that time, Findley now. She was my teacher, I was in 4th grade. Carl Gainer was the principal, he taught the big room. And he like to play softball. He would go to Shockey and Junior and all these places to play softball. When he would do that, he'd send the students he had left over in to Gertrude's room. He'd send some 5th and 6th grade boys to stay with Gertrude, but he chose me out of the 4th grade, took me with him on the ball team. Now, buddy, if you think there weren't hard feelings there, between the boys in his room, when he'd select me, the only one, only one out of the little room that he would come over there and get, and that was me. Mr. Gainer ordered all of us ball caps. The only time we used those ball caps was when we were on a game. So we went to Shockey one day to play a ball game, we had those little caps on. He measured our heads, and you had your own individual caps, but he took care of it. So, we went to Shockey to play a ball game down there and it started raining and those ball caps faded!.....all those different colors!.....boy, I'll never forget that! I remember another thing about that year, too. Carl only taught up there one year, but I remember how many ball games we played and how many we lost. We played 11 games and we only lost two!

Gary: Now, what year was that?

Bob: 1936.

Gary: And that year you were still at Point Pleasant.

Bob: And we played Shockey, down on 92. We played Junior. We played Corley. We went to Belington to their graded school, and they had all kinds of kids to select from. See, they would have a whole room full of 8th graders, you know what I mean? And we would beat them! We went across the hill, over to what is Industrial Park now. There was a ball diamond up in there.....there was a big board fence all around that diamond. The

high school played their football games over there, too. Hugh, surely you remember that. I know how you remember it, too,.....Philippi was playing Belington a football game one time and you were working at the woolen mill, and Bud Cox was with us, and Connie...Gene Holbert's wife.....Connie Poling, Ruth White, and Bud Cox, and myself and Harold Daugherty.

Hugh: Harold Daugherty, yeah,.....he's dead now.

Bob: And you didn't go to work that night, you had Harold check you in! I remember that very well, Harold said, "You don't want to go to work tonight? Hugh, you don't have to, I'll check you in!"

Hugh: Did I have that '35 Ford?

Bob: You had that '37 Ford, I believe.

Hugh: Oh, okay.

Bob: I believe that's the one you had. I remember going over to that football game.

Hugh: William was going to come up. I loaned him the 1937 Ford and he wrecked it! He flipped it on its top. Milford Holbert was with him. Also, they had just picked up Bussie Lantz. He was hitch-hiking. William came in and said, "I wrecked your car." I said, "Is it hurt?" He said, "Oh, not too much." I went up there and I couldn't get it out! I had to take a bumper jack and jack the top up so I could get in it and start it up. It turned right over on its top. I turned it over. Ray Register was the one who helped me turn it over, and he said, "Hugh, you better check the oil". It had been laying on its top for what, a couple hours? I put a couple quarts of oil in it and drove it home.

Bob: You may have gone to work later that night, I don't remember. Harold was still in high school, he was working after school hours, Harold Daugherty was, at the woolen mill.

Hugh: Were you working there?

Bob: I didn't work there. William did.

Hugh: Oh, William did.

Gary: I guess all you Thompson's were pretty famous for ball playing. What do you remember playing ball? I know me and Tommy and Chucky.....I got a letter from Tommy not too long ago, and he was telling me some of the things he really remembered was when they'd come in, Grandma would make us a ball out of sock, she'd sew it with thread. We'd bat that thing around out there in that little yard with a broom stick. Now, did you guys start the same way?

Bob: Yes, in deed! That's exactly the way we started.

Hugh: We had to make our own ball.

Bob: I played ball, I expect it was 1st or 2nd grade.

Gary: Now, you played in, basically, almost in what would be the minor leagues around here? Or what kind of leagues did they have?

Bob: The Mountain State League was the last team I played with. Belington, with the Mountain State League. It was classified as semi-pro ball.....the reason I know that is because that year there was a book that came out. It was put out by the National Baseball of Congress, and it had Belington's name in there.....and I'd love to get a hold of that book. I don't know where to see about it. I've asked Whitey Heatherly if he knew anything about Clarence's belonging because Clarence Heatherly, Whitey's dad, was our manager there one year and I'm pretty sure he had one of them. And Roy.....Roy Hammon had one.....he was one of the commissioners, and I just wish I knew. Whitey Heatherly said he didn't know anything about any of Clarence's belongings. But, I thought maybe if I might look in the library up in Elkins, or someplace.....oh, there's a way of finding out, but I'm pretty sure it would recognize the league. The National Baseball of Congress classified us as semi, probably class "D" or something like that. It wouldn't have been a Triple A or anything of that nature. When you go into Triple A you go in the big league, don't you?

Gary: Yeah.

Hugh: I remember one time we had a ball game. I didn't practice or nothing. Delbert Wagner bawled me out one night, he said, "You little son of gun, you don't come practice ball, you ain't gonna play!" So I said, "Okay." So, I went down there, I was going with that June Evans, way down there, she lived near the Corley school house. One day, about 1 o'clock on a Sunday I said, "June, how about walking up to Mt. Liberty with us. We're going have a ball game up there." "Well, okay." We went up there, and I was standing behind the backstop, see, and Brooks Griffith came up to bat, and there was three guys on base. You remember that? And Dorsey Bennett over there was pitching. So, Delbert said, "Hold it up, hold it up, I'm going to put a pinch hitter in." He put me in there and the second ball that came over was high, and I loved them high balls! And I hit a home run and won the ball game! You remember that, Bob?

Bob: I don't know whether I was there or not.

Hugh: I knocked it clear over that fence out there.

Bob: When I played with the Mountain State League, one Sunday I pitched Elkins out 11 to nothing. We went to the prison farm up at Huttonsville the next Sunday and played the prisoners. They had a runner on first base, he was a colored fella, they had a colored coach. Just as I was getting ready to make my delivery I heard that coach tell that runner, he says, "Now when that pitcher throws that ball, you steal second." That runner looked around and said, "Man, what do you think I'm in here for!" Come to find out he was in there for stealing!

Gary: He wasn't going to do it again, huh?

Bob: He'd never do it again! I was laughing so hard I had to come to a stop. It's a wonder the umpire hadn't called "ball" on me but he didn't.

Hugh: Oh, boy, those were the good old days, weren't they?.....I went up there to Huttonsville one time. I was in a farm training program. That was the first time we had ever seen a potato digger. They'd go along and the

potatoes would come up, they had different size holes and the little ones would drop in and the big ones would come up top.

July 9, 1994 - Hugh and Gary Thompson

Gary: I wanted to find out where you were in the Army. You got drafted, or volunteered? I can't remember.

Hugh: I got drafted.

Gary: So where did they send you first?

Hugh: They sent me to Fort Hayes, Ohio. I went from Fort Hayes, Ohio to Camp Gruber, Oklahoma.

Gary: Okay, and from Camp Gruber..... well, which one was basic training?

Hugh: Basic training was in Camp Gruber, Oklahoma. There's where I had to learn to march. Then, we went from there. I was there about....I only had about six months training. We went from there to Camp Polk, Louisiana. We went through.....underneath machine gun fire and all like that. This one guy said, "Hey, I don't think them are real bullets." So, he stuck his steel helmet up. He took his steel helmet off, they called him "Alligator". You crawled under that, didn't you?

Gary: Yep.

Hugh: So, binnnnnng....he said, "That's live ammo!" So then, they told us, our Colonel, Colonel Hawkins, "Now save all your money. You might see the bright lights." Well, he knew for a fact that we were going to New York to get on a boat. We didn't know it for sure. We went up pretty close to New York. He said, "Don't pitch no puppy tents, because we're headed overseas. I promised you to see the bright lights. Can you see them?" Yeah, we could see them from a long distance. But, we thought we were going to get to go to New York and see the bright lights before we would get on the boat. So, he said, "No use to pitch the puppy tents, sit on your barracks bags". Well, I had a barracks bag and a sea bag packed, and we went from there over to New York, went up the gangplank to get on a boat. They said, "Don't give your first name or anything. If they call your first name, just say Thompson. If they say Harold, say Thompson." "Okay." We sat on our barracks bag all night that night before we moved out on that ship. Then we needed a canteen of water. You couldn't go

from here to that tractor. That boat, the MONTEREY....by the way, that guy that was over there yesterday, he was on the MONTEREY once. So we got on there and we would line up to go get a canteen full of water. Then we'd line up and we would get up on the top deck. I was on the bottom deck to start with. It took three days to get up on top. And we had it, when we pulled out of New York harbor, it took us 45 minutes, pretty close to an hour, for everyone to get on the top deck to jump overboard in case we had to. Do you know how much we done that? We trained on the way out of the New York harbor. In about three days, we could do it all. We could take everyone off that ship in 15 minutes. First we started lining up in columns of two, going up the steps, then we done it with three, then with four, and everyone knew just exactly what to do and at what time. You heard a little whistle. We got that down so pat everyone could have got off that boat in 15 minutes. Seven thousand people. It was built for 600. There was 7,000 soldiers on it, mind you, not even counting the crew. The boat crew, the guys that fed us and cooked, and the guys that run it.

Gary: What was the name of the boat?

Hugh: The MONTEREY.

Gary: The MONTEREY. And that went from New York to where?

Hugh: We went to Oran, Africa. And we stopped there for about two weeks. I'll never forget this. I was a Corporal, and Sergeant Jones, he was a 1st Sergeant. Well, we got liberty to go Casablanca. And the 1st Sergeant took a truck, and took us all down there. He got drunk and wrecked the truck. Well, they fired him...

Gary: Broke him?

Hugh: Broke him. Then Mike Sasseski, or something like that, he was from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, he took over. He was a great big guy. He used to be a wrestler. He said, "Now, let me tell you something. This wrestling is not real. One time I was supposed to win, and in the next town I was supposed to lose. I forgot and I won, and that messed the whole thing up!" Boy, he weighed about 250, all muscle. I'll never forget that guy. And he took over as our 1st Sergeant. And Sergeant Jones, he's the one that got busted, he was the 1st Sergeant to start with, he got busted on account of wreckin' that truck going into Casablanca. So one day we

were out there and here comes the shells in, and the bombs. Old Sergeant Jones, the last thing I seen of him, he dived under this haystack. Well, a big piece of shrapnel about that big around hit him right in the rear. "Oh, my god! I'm dead! I'm dead!" Well, I jumped right in behind him, and I said, "Hey, take it easy, take it easy." I said, "You know, when you used to be 1st Sergeant, you used to give me a hard time." He said, "Yeah, I did, didn't I?" I said, "Now, I'm a Corporal and you're a Private. Now I'm going to give you a hard time!" "No, don't do it!" I said, "Oh, okay!" We had a little fun.....Sometimes I think about it, and sometimes I'd like to forget it. But we had fun along the way.

Gary: So you stopped in Oran, Africa for two weeks, then where did you go from there?

Hugh: We went from Oran to Naples harbor. Algiers, is it in Naples? No, we went to Algiers first.

Gary: You went to Algiers first, is that still in Africa?

Hugh: Now, I forget! Anyway, I think we went from Casablanca, or North Africa, Oran. You know what, we I got off the boat in Oran, we would throw cigarettes over to all these kids waiting for them. And that was the dirtiest harbor that you ever seen in your life. You could see rass-a-foo floating around on the water. Those kids would dive in there, and we'd light a cigarette and throw it over in the water and they'd get it, and buddy, they'd smoke it. So, old Jones, he'd say, "Let's take a little of this powder." We had powder. We'd take the cigarette and dob two or three little pieces of grains of powder back in there, lit it and threw it over. A guy would pick it up, "Oh, boy!" He started smoking and that son of bitch blew up! Oh man, it scared the heck out him! You can imagine. We left there and we went to, by heck, I don't know, Algiers? No, I believe we went to Naples harbor. Anyway, they had just took Naples, United States did. 88th Infantry and 34th Infantry..... and they bombed when we were there. Well, we had just got off the boat and was walking around what you call the college place. Big college. Well, we slept on the ground, and we seen these all these lights and stuff, flares and bombs. And they just bombed that.....well anyway, we started running and our Colonel said, "Hit the ground! Hit the ground!" Well, if you lay down, and something comes in, it explodes and goes up like that, 250 yards. So we hit the ground and I told Jones, "Hey, just like the 4th of July!" Bout that time one came in pretty close to us! "No, this ain't the 4th of July!" Boy, I hugged the ground that night. But, we had activity all night.

Gary: That was in Naples?

Hugh: Uh-huh, Naples. So we looked around and we seen these bombers coming. The Germans were bombing Naples and they bombed that.....what's that bigPompeii, you know where Pompeii was, and all that? Mt. Vesuvius had lava coming down. They were trying to hit that. They figured lava would flow down on us and that would put us out of commission, but they missed us. We looked around and here's a couple of bombs hit the back of our ship, the one we just got off of. It just took the whole back end off. Now that was a big one. We went from New York to Africa on the MONTEREY, but then we got on another boat someway or another. It was a little old boat. But they hit it, right after we got off of it.

Gary: What company were you in? Were you in the same company or same division the whole time? The same one you went through basic training and all that with? What was the company?

Hugh: 985th Artillery. And Taylor Carter down here, he was in 173rd, and there was a Croston down here, and we were always kind of pretty close together. I'd see them.

Gary: That was the division? How many men is in a division?

Hugh: About 8,000.

Gary: So were you in a certain company then, too?

Hugh: Yeah, I was in 985th Field Artillery.

Gary: 985th Field Artillery. How many men were in that, the 985th.

Hugh: Well, let's see. We had A Battery, B Battery, C Battery, F BatteryI don't know, we had about five Batteries.

Gary: Which Battery were you in?

Hugh: Service Battery.

Gary: You were in the Service Battery?

Hugh: I had to fix the guns when they would quit firing, and this and that. But I was on the road all the time. Them Germans had me zeroed in. They could tell when I left, those zero men. I had shrapnel go through my gas tank on the GMC truck. You had five gallons of gas on this side, and 128 holes in my truck one time.

Gary: What kind of truck did you drive?

Hugh: GMC. Six by six.

Gary: So, now you fixed the guns.....you kept the guns firing. When the guns would break you would....

Hugh: I'd have to fix 'em.

Gary: But then you drove truck when you were moving?

Hugh: Well, when I'd go from one Battery to the other, to fix this gun here, and then maybe have to go up here and fix one. So, I was up at B Battery one time fixing one, and I was laying under this truck and a big 210 came in.....is that right? A German shell. It lit within 30 feet of me. I'll telling you, that thing picked me up off the ground. It was a good thing I was under this truck. It picked me up off the ground and struck me two or three times up against the frame.....and I looked over here, and I'll never forget his name, Captain Long. He said, "Tommy, are you hurt?" I said, "No." He said, "Well, I am." I looked around and he had his left arm blew off.....There was another time when it was the American planes shooting at us.

Gary: They were bombing their own guys and didn't know it?

Hugh: They shot holes all over my truck. The machine gun I had, you know on the truck, the machine gun goes round and round, it was on the turret of my truck. The machine gunner, his name was Kelly..... we had a hell of time finding him. He jumped off there and I said, "What good is that machine gun doing?" He was down

underneath the truck! Old Colonel Hawkins, he'd went ahead. "Tommy, what happened?" I said, "I don't know." My windshield was shot out and everything. There was a bullet hole one inch from my foot. If I'd had a purple heart I would have got out of the Army. I would have had five more points. I would have got out of the Army two months quicker. Oh, you don't understand this...

Gary: Oh, yeah I do. Come over and sit down. We're going to leave here in a few minutes. I'd like to find out more about where you were at over there.

Hugh: Well, I guess, Cassino was the worst, I think that was the worst. It took four months to take that town.

Gary: From where you got off the ship, then what did they do? Did they just keep advancing after that? From Naples?

Hugh: Uh-huh. Yeah. Uh-huh.

Gary: Going North? Going up?

Hugh: Going up, up the boot. We were on the West side. Gearl was over on the other side, the East, over with General Montgomery. Gearl came up there and they wouldn't let him through. Three miles behind the front lines he got a light. You can use your lights, from there on in you had to go blackout, you know what I mean? We were always about 200 yards behind the Infantry. We supported the 88th Infantry. That Robinson boy down here was in the 88th.

Gary: So, now what division was Gearl in?

Hugh: He was in the 21st Engineers, but he was way back from the front lines. The activity, action, that he had was airplanes bombing. Not even artillery. Artillery could shoot 22 miles accurate.

Gary: So how close were you to front lines most of the time?

Hugh: About 250 yards. Always right behind.

Gary: Just right behind the Infantry.

Hugh: What do you call it came up there one time, one of the Generals. "What are you doing up here? Fifty yards behind the enemy!" General Clark got bawled out because they put us too close to the Infantry. By heck, I tell you something, those Infantry guys would come back there, they would try to give them a rest once in while. They'd come back there and they couldn't take it. They said, "No, I'd rather be up in front. I don't want to be back here with those bombs, those big old shells coming in here." They could kill you at 250 yards when one exploded. And I'll never forget....the Germans, they would pick us up. They'd watch the lights flash when the guns went off. They'd be up in the airplanes, see, little airplanes. Then they'd call in to their CP....what's CP stand for? Oh, I forget...anyway, they'd give them directions to shoot on us. So then, we started using flashless powder. You put a big shell in that piece, about as big as that. You put a 90 pound shell in, and put the charge behind it, nothing but black powder. Then you would shove the breech block, then you'd pull the lanyard, the rope to trip the trigger. You had to keep your mouth open, so it wouldn't burst your ear drums. The Germans were picking this up, see. They'd see the flash of those guns. Well, I've stood there on the front lines a lot of nights, 12 o'clock at night, pitch dark, and you could sit there and read a newspaper. And you would have to hold on to something, the ground would shake. Six hundred artillery pieces opened up all at one time. We took this hill.....well, Cassino was the worst. It took us four months to take that little town. They were so well fortified in there, the Germans. The Italians had already given up when we took Cassino, I'm pretty sure. But they were dirty. They would be in a great big house, upstairs, looking down on us and they'd radio and tell the Germans just exactly where our location was, and drop a shell in there. They started using smoke shells. They'd drop one in and then they'd say, "Well, you go on line, so many yards to the right, drop one. Now so many yards to the left, then so many yards in the front." And then they'd say, "Zero it in".....them Germans would even shoot at one vehicle with artillery, a German 88. Purple Heart Valley. Boy, I'm telling you that was something else. Purple Heart Valley, that's what it was called. Nothing but a valley, and the Germans there, and there, and everything. They'd fire on us all the time. Even if one vehicle went up that road, they'd fire on them with an 88. They had the 88. That was the best gun, according to everyone, that was ever made. The Germans made it. The Germans weren't no dummies, they were smart. So, then they had the

guns back in the mountain. They'd pull them out on the railroad track and shoot. Then they'd back up and you couldn't see them. Something like a pill box. You ever seen a pill box? Ever see any movies?

Gary: We watched "D-Day". We watched the stuff about D-Day.

Hugh: I'll never forget D-Day.....it was on my birthday. Me and Karrino, that little boy, little guy.

Gary: What was his whole name? Do you remember?

Hugh: Frances Karrino, K-A-R-R-I-N-O.

Gary: Where was he from?

Hugh: New Jersey, Brunswick....New Brunswick, and I never could get a hold of him.

Gary: New Brunswick?

Hugh: Uh-huh. And before he went in the Army he was with about 15 guys, they had motorcycles. Harley Davidsons. They'd go clear around the United States every year. He was something.....So, him and I slept together. Someone asked me what a "sheltered half" was the other day. Sheltered half was half a tent, that's why they called it a half. You and your buddy pitched one little tent. He carried half of the tent and I carried half. So me and him started pitching a little tent together. On the sixth day of June, about 3 o'clock in the morning I was standing guard. I had a 30/30 carbine and I was leaning on an old fence rail. You know they had rail fence like this, and he was over there on the other point. I went over.....well, we'd been fighting.....going for a long time, couldn't stay awake....we was really wore out and tired. And I shook him, had to wake him up. He fell asleep. Buddy, that's one thing you don't want to do, is fall asleep when you are fightin' Germans. So I shook him and I said, "Hey, Karrino! They just made that big invasion!" We'd been hearing about it, but we didn't know what it was going to be, and everyone said they made the invasion in the wrong place. There were a lot of men. I said, "They just made that big invasion. The war won't last very long now." Well, it didn't. And it was on my birthday.....hmmm.

Gary: Where were you at then? On D-Day?

Hugh: Still in Italy. We were up pretty close to Austria. I know a boy that got killed in Austria.....so we took that. Well, Cassino was the worst, then Bologna. We went by the Leaning Tower.

Gary: Leaning Tower of Pisa?

Hugh: Uh-huh....I met Bob Moore up there. Pearl Everson, you remember my first cousin? I was going up the street and he was going down. We met! I turned around. I stopped, turned around, and looked. He done the same thing. He said, "Wait a minute! Come here! Your name Thompson?" I said, "Yeah, your name Moore?" He said, "Yep!" First guy I ever seen, you know, from the United States which I knew from West Virginia.....old Bob Moore.

Gary: So now, where were you at when the war ended?

Hugh: Pretty close to Austria. And we's so happy! The Captain said, Captain Beam, I'll never forget him. He said, "Now, take your helmets out there, steel helmets, and paint 'em. We're going to turn 'em in when we get to headquarters." Well, I was paintin' mine. I had Corporal strips on them, you know, on top. Bout that time shells started coming in! Well, me and Karrino got underneath this barn. Well, they quit shelling after while. Come to find out there was a panther outfit, German tanks, over there. We kept dropping leaflets in there, the airplane did, telling them the war was over. "No! It ain't over! We're going win this war!" And they fought on us three days after the war was over! Now that's the honest God's truth.

Gary: Wouldn't quit, huh?

Hugh: Wouldn't quit! They couldn't believe that they had lost the war. So when we painted our helmets to make them look new, and we took all the markings off the bumpers on the trucks and the tanks, and all that. Well, we thought we were going to get to go home. Well, I didn't have enough points cause I was only in the United States six months in the Army. Some of them, old National Guard outfits, had been there and had four or five hash marks. Been in there 15 years. Well, they had privileges over me. But anyway, we went back

down there and they came out with points to go home. Well, I only had 71 points. Had to have 75. So, after the war was over, I had to stay over there about four or five months to get enough points to come home. And I was over there in combat, and a lot of them guys never seen combat, but they had a lot of time in the Army. You were allowed so much for every year you'd been in. There wasn't nothin' fair about it...But, I'll never forget there at Bologna. I had to go up this hill all the time to get gas for the Battalion, and they'd fire on me going up there. They knew exactly when I was going out, the time, and the time when I'd come back. So, I got on top of the hill and it was an old dirt road, you know. And these here donuts.....they had a donut stand there..Americans put it up. Civilians! Two good looking girls working this donut stand for the USO. I stopped there and got me some donuts, and I pulled away. And I betcha I didn't get from here to across the road, and bombs came in there and killed them all. Them two girls, now they were volunteers. Just to help the soldiers out, you know. Giving us donuts and coffee.....

Gary: Who was the General that was in charge of your division?

Hugh: General Clark.

Gary: Clark?

Hugh: I think he's dead...yeah.

Gary: Did he survive the war?

Hugh: Yeah.

Gary: Was he actually out there?

Hugh: No!

Gary: He was back behind the lines, a long ways?

Hugh: Oh, hell yeah! I seen....one time there was a couple more Generals...it wasn't Patten now, he got killed. His jeep turned over. He got killed. He was old blood and guts. Oh, they gave him.....he lost a lot of men, but he.....I'm telling you, when he won, he won! You remember him, you probably heard enough about him.....and old Patten, I seen him. He was back there with General Clark and they didn't want to establish that beachhead. Anzio beachhead. Did you ever hear of that?

Gary: So you weren't at Anzio, though, were you?

Hugh: I could hear them firing. I was here.....right here's Anzio beachhead, and we always went in a spearhead, like this. We was getting fire from here on the left side, the right side, and in the front! Plus airplanes dropping bombs. I don't know why we always went in the spearhead. They told General Clark, "Hey, that's wrong." General Clark and all of them got bawled out for that. Roosevelt was the one that done it. Said, "Now let's take this beachhead right here, Anzio." Why, hell, up here in the mountain, I'm telling you, the Germans were so well fortified. They'd have a pill box. They'd even have rail tracks....railroad tracks going back in the mountain....they'd pull the big guns out and shoot, and then pull 'em in so they couldn't get hit. And they told me....I tell you, I talked to some guy who was in the Navy. They wouldn't stay there. The Navy took all these soldiers in there, and they let them off, oh, I don't know, maybe, say far as from here to the bottom of the hill, then they go in on....what do you call it? Amphibians....and get on land through the water, and the Germans started firing on them, and that Navy wanted to pull out! They pulled out! They wouldn't stay there. I told Herbert Holbert that, and he didn't like it. Deed, I'm telling you the truth, the Navy wouldn't stay there afterwards....they were damn glad to see all these soldiers get off their boats so they could get the hell out of there. You better believe it....it's the truth.

Gary: Now, who was your next in command after General Clark?

Hugh: He was always my Commander, in the Army.

Gary: Now then, who was under him? Did you have a....

Hugh: Colonel Hawkins.

Gary: Hawkins?

Hugh: Yeah, you see you have Generals, four stars, three stars, two stars. Then you got.....well, General Clark, he was a two star, I think. He wasn't a big, big shot, but he was over us. He was over the 5th Army, and Gearl, he was over on the other side of Italy, he was under the 8th Army. Well, the 8th Army was British....he was under General Montgomery.

Gary: Now, what did Gearl do? He was in the Engineers?

Hugh: He was in the 21st Engineers. All he done was deliver. He drove a big truck. He delivered dozers, and this and that, to different outfits. And I don't believe you could call him as being in combat lines. But I was in the front lines 22 months. I was only in the service 28 months. Six of it was in the United States. The rest of it was on the front lines.

Gary: So when you started, you basically started from.....

Hugh: Naples.

Gary: From Naples all the way up to.....

Hugh: Kree'as.....and that's in Italy.

Gary: Now you had to stay there in Kree'as?

Hugh: On Route 7.

Gary: Route 7?

Hugh: Route 7, and I can take you there and I can show you every place we were stalled. It took us months to take the little town of Cassino. Can you believe that? You remember that big Abbey on top of there?.....The Germans had this big Abbey, well, it belonged to the Italians. That's a religious joint. Oh, it was big...I bet it would reach from here to across the road, wouldn't it? And we were going to fire on it and they wouldn't let us. Well, the Germans were using it for a CP, Command Post. And they would direct fire out of that building on to us and we got tired of it. That was that Purple Heart Valley. We couldn't get the orders to fire on it. General Clark wouldn't let us fire on it. So this one old guy, I'm telling you the truth, he got so peed off about it, he come on a shootin' that one gun by himself one night. He had it exactly right on that target and they caught him. They knocked him down and kept him from firing on it. Well, about a month later we got orders to fire on the Abbey and destroy it. We leveled it. It was bombed.

July 9, 1994 - Hugh and Gary Thompson, talking about the Army, WWII, and coming home to Mavis.

Gary: I tell you one thing, even if some of them are dead, if I can get hold of some of their families, I figured I could.

Hugh: Oh, yeah....old John Edgerton. Putney, I'll never forget him.

Gary: What were some of the names and where they lived, some of the people you were in the Army with, tell us a little bit about them.

Hugh: Most of them were from Milwaukee and Green Bay, Wisconsin. John Edgerton, Mike Edgerton. Most of them were funny names. Polish, or something. But, anyway, Mike, John. I can't think of that one guy that saved my life one time....Grissom.

Gary: Grissom? Was he from Wisconsin....Milwaukee?

Hugh: Green Bay.....mostly all of them were from Milwaukee or Green Bay. Every time they would talk about Wisconsin it was Green Bay or Milwaukee. Is Milwaukee the capital, or Green Bay?

Gary: I'm not sure. What was Grissom's first name?

Hugh: John. I think it was John, but we never went by first names. It was just like my name was Thompson, but they always called me Tommy, short for Thompson. You hardly ever heard anyone call them by their first name. Sergeant Ellyard, now he was from Wisconsin. Hey, I'll tell you what, I'll think about it some of these nights and I'll start writing them down.

Gary: Yeah, you should.

Hugh: I wish I had my Battalion Book. Someone told me Cindy had it, and I asked her and she said "no". I remember the last time I had it was out in Gettysburg, and me and Mavis came in here for something. We went back and Donnie had.... well it had got all tore up, you know. Well, it wasn't torn, but there were sheets here and sheets there, and he put every sheet in place and I never could find that. I asked him where it was at, he said "Cindy's got it" and I asked her and she said "No, I don't have it." I don't know where it's at, to tell you the truth about it. But, you know what I can do, I can call Washington, DC and I can get a new one made up. Or, if I get someone out of the 985th Field Artillery that's got one I can have a copy made. I would like to have it.

Gary: Well, I'd like to....like I said, I figured on trying to see if even I could get as far as....sometimes the photographers, they might have pictures of some of it. They might have movies of it. A lot of that stuff, now you could get, see.

Hugh: They used to take movies. I was hoping I would someday get to see that one. We had just took this hill, and we were going up this hill. It was raining. It rained 40 days and 40 nights one time. You might not believe that but it did. We were going up there, and I picked me up a little dog about this long and that high, a little black and white dog. I took it out of its nest from its mother, and I took it with me. And my 1st Sergeant said, "You can't keep that dog. You can't keep it." I said, "You wait and see. I'll hide it." Every time the inspection guy came around I'd hide it under my seat. We were going up this mountain. I had that little dog, see. No windshields, it was covered up with canvas. I had this little dog sitting up there. He always wanted to sit up there when I was driving. I looked up, and here was some guy up there with a movie camera. And I always thought I would like to see that. It's there somewhere, but I don't know where a guy would ever see it.

Gary: I'm not sure.

Hugh: I thought maybe they might have put it on news reel someday, you know.

Gary: Oh, it probably was. If a person just knew when they were going to show it.

Hugh: I wrote Mom a letter and told her about it, and she watched all the news and she never did see it. But the funny thing about it.....I'll bet you.....they said that Anzio beachhead.....now they said you could stand

around and count the old men, the rest of them were killed. You ought to go, I'll take you over there some of these days, Anzio beachhead. I've been there. They have a big graveyard. It's kind of hard to understand, why did they do that? They could stand.....they could stand around, and count your old men at 12 o'clock at night. They said if the Germans had kept firing two more hours, there wouldn't have been no Anzio beachhead. But they just coincidentally quit firing, and they rushed in. Then they started getting replacements, replacements.

Gary: So now, when did you get married? Was Janet born when you went into the Army?

Hugh: No, I didn't get married till I came back.

Gary: So where did you first meet Mom at?

Hugh: Oh, that's before I went into the service, in 1941 or 42.

Gary: So how did you meet her?

Hugh: Well, I was in Washington, DC, working as a mechanic out there in a car lot. So I would come in here, and my mother wrote me a letter and said, "Hugh, you just as well come in. Gearl's working down at the woolen mill. He got his call to the Army." Well, before I came in he got his call. So I thought, "By heck, I'd better go, because Gearl went and I'll be the next one." And my mother told me in the letter, "You'll be the next one called out of Barbour County." Well, I came in here and I had a '35 Ford, a four door sedan. So William told me, "Hey, there are some good looking Corley girls moved from Junior down to Union." He knew I was interested, you know. So I said, "Are they going to school down there." They were going to the High School. Okay, so I go down there with William and I'm going down into the basement, you know where the furnace use to be. Did you ever go to the old High School down there? So I started down them steps and William says, "There's one....Mavis!" And I started talking to her. From then on I would always drive down there. I knew exactly when she would get on the school bus to come home. I would park there in front of the school house and every time I seen her get on the bus she would always get in the back end so she could wave at me. Tantalize me! So I would follow her home very neared every night, and she would wave out the back end of the bus.

Gary: Now, when was that? 1941?

Hugh: 1941 or 42, because I went in the Army, let's see it was December 21st. Inducted, I mean. I was a soldier. They said, "Now we're going to treat you pretty good. We're going to let you go back home and spend Christmas and be back here on the 27th of December." Over to that big motel over in Clarksburg. I forget the name of it. (Stonewall Jackson Hotel) Anyway, we got to come home for Christmas and when we went back, we went from Clarksburg to Fort Hays, Ohio. Got all of our uniforms, clothes. Funny thing, going through that line, they said, "What size shoes do you wear?" I said, "7 1/2". "Okay". They gave me 12's. I said, "Them are too big!" "Hey, you keep your damn mouth shut, you get on through there. You're in the Army now!" Boy, when I got up to Camp Gruber, Oklahoma, my pants were three sizes bigger. Everything I had was, and here were my No.12 shoes settin' down there. So I talked to my 1st Sergeant. I said, "Hey, I can't wear them." He said, "I don't blame you." So I turned them in. I come in and got shoes that fit me. When I was overseas you always carried one extra pair of shoes with you. Well, I would wear one pair and save the new ones, you know, save them for this Moire. He was fighting with us. We had these British....right down below us...Moire....they were from India....I forget. Anyway, he wanted those shoes. I had them in my barracks pack. I said, "No, I can't do that. I have to have an old pair to turn in to RIA." If you got an old one to turn in you can get a new one. He gave me a German luger for it, a brand new gun, loaded. It's a pistol, a revolver. And I couldn't resist that, so I found an old pair of shoes. I turned them in and got my new pair. Oh heck, I'll tell you something, in Africa, you know what they would do? The French Morocco, they would come around and they would dig up dead American soldiers. You don't believe in that, do you?.....

Gary: What year did you get out of school? What was the last year you went? You started off, you went to Point Pleasant, right? You went to school at Point Pleasant first. Was that the first school you went to?

Hugh: I think. Maybe it was Valley Dell, no....Mt. Liberty. Then Valley Dell, then Point Pleasant. Then I started to High School in 1940, 1941. Anyway, I finished my first year and second year. I always fall down in mathematics, but civics, science, and I took that manual training. In Vo-Ag I would make such a high grade that it brought my average up. You see, they averaged it, and that's the only reason I passed. So one day, I forget what it was, me and Harry Smith or someone asked Mr. Carpenter....was Carpenter ever your teacher?

Someone said he is still living, in Buchannon. Well anyway, we went in there and asked him, it was on Friday, if we could go to the Forest Festival. "Nope!" So I said, "Well, we're going anyway!" And we did. We went back to school on Monday morning, and I was expelled for the rest of the week. They expelled me for three or four days. I finally got back. Then the last time, I said, "To hell with you, I'm going to Washington, DC." So I went down there to Polings, where Poling's Store is now, stuck my thumb out and started thumbin'. I was going to Washington, DC to get me a job, and that's what happened.

Gary: So, how long did you work in Washington, DC? You were a mechanic out there?

Hugh: Yeah, I was there about.....last part of '39, I believe...no, the last part of '40, 41, and part of '42 because I came in in December, around Christmas time in '42.

Gary: What was the name of the place you worked out there?

Hugh: Sheppard Park Motor Sales....yeah, and I got Herbert a job. I got him over there. And I got Ralph Poling who runs this store over there a job. About as far as from here to that house over there, in the "White Coffee Pot". That's a little restaurant, they had white coffee pots. But anyway, he stayed with me. I got my room first, you see. I had two rooms near Rock Creek Park. And I got June out there. Well, he became the head mechanic, over top of me. And Madge and little Shirley. So, we got Ralph to come out. He stayed with us, he gave June something. After June came out there, I turned all the apartment rings over to him, and he would charge us all \$12 a piece for rent, and that was feeding, too. So, Ralph, me and Dewey Booth.

Gary: So what year did you come back, when you went into the Army, then? 1942?

Hugh: When did I come back from the Army?

Gary: No, when you left Washington, DC to go to the Army.

Hugh: 1942.

Gary: 1942. Then when did you get out of the Army?

Hugh: 1945.

Gary: 1945. What did you do right after that? Did the Army send you to any kind of schools?

Hugh: Well, I went to diesel mechanic school at Camp Gruber, Oklahoma, to be a diesel mechanic.

Gary: In the Army?

Hugh: Yeah.

Gary: And then after you got out of the Army, where did you go and what did you do?

Hugh: I came home, like a dummy, and married Mavis!

Gary: Well, she waved at you from the school bus all that time, right? Did she write to you while you were over there?

Hugh: Yeah, and I'd write her. V-Mail, you know, it would go by air. Little old fine writing. So, I got out, I believe it was about the same time I went in, only in 1945. 23rd or 24th of December in 1945. No, wait a minute, I got that wrong.....November I got out, 22nd, 23rd, something along there. And on the 19th of December me and Mavis got married. That's the 19th, because I remember I wanted to do it on account of William's birthday, he was born on the 19th of December.

Gary: So, where did you get married at?

Hugh: Philippi.

Gary: Where at in Philippi?

Hugh: I can show you the old house. Right in behind, you know where that South End Market use to be on this end....if you are going down by Grab-a-Nickel and go out there, and there's the South End Market, and you come out on Main Street. It was right back in here. It's the Philippian Chapel now.

Gary: Behind the South End Market?

Hugh: Uh-huh. Burnett was his name. A preacher, Burnett.

Gary: So it was in his house.

Hugh: We had to take a blood test and all like that, and we went in there and he married us. Herbert was with us. Herbert and Carol were already married.

Gary: They were the witnesses?

Hugh: Yeah, so they went with us to get married, and I'm telling you, that night it snowed so bad. I had a '35 Ford, no I had a '37 Ford. We went up on this hill, and I said, "I can't get down that hill." I went down, and I started slidin'. I cut the wheel but it didn't make no difference. It went clear up on the sidewalk, and clear through a man's yard, and back down. We said, "We can go up here." At that time they called it the "City Restaurant", beside the movie theater. There's an ice cream shop there now. Hughes, I believe run it, I'm not sure. And Carol and Herbert wanted to make sure they were going to get us our wedding supper. Well, we went in there and he ordered up steak. Boy, we had a big supper.....when are you going to come back? Do you like West Virginia? I'm wantin' you to come back anytime you can.

Gary: So, then Janet was born a year later?

Hugh: Yeah, that was the only time it had me worried. Ten months after we were married, Janet come along.

Gary: Where were you working right after you got out of the Army?

Hugh: Shorty Haddixes'. No, me and June ran a shop down here. We made good money, down at Gordon Knapp's. Then some way or another Shorty Haddix told me he would like for me to come down there. And I said, "Well, we are doing pretty good up here." But he said, "No, I want you to come down and work with me." So I went down there, and at that time if you just got out of the Army you had the right to sign up and get you some tools. Well, I went in to Shorty Haddix like I was going to school..... well, what was it the Army had?

Gary: The GI Bill?

Hugh: The GI Bill! So, they got me a big tool box of tools, snap ons. I got all that free. So I worked there about 7 or 8 years. Then one day, well, I done Shorty wrong....in '51 I went across the street and bought a new Ford car. He was selling Chrysler, Plymouth, and Dodge. So I went over there and got that brand new '51 Ford and brought it over there. I put it up on the horse and undercoated it and Shorty come over and said, "Hey, what are you doing?" I said, "I'm undercoatin' my car". He said, "What car?" I said, "MY car." He said, "You buy a Ford??" and I said, "Yeah". He said, "Why didn't you buy a Plymouth, or a Dodge?" That was before a V-8 came out. I said, "If they ever come out with a V-8 engine I might buy one." He said, "Hugh, I hope you never have to buy one." He didn't want none. In '53 they started coming out. So I went to Elmer Campbell, he started begging me to come over to the Ford garage. I knew Don Kines for a long time. Finally, I went over there and I said to Elmer, "I hate to do this. I hate to leave Shorty over there, but I have a notion to come over." He said, "You do that." I remember very well when that was. That was in 1954, because Elmer had just bought a brand new '54 Ford car, a four door, and his boy worked there. What was his name? Well, anyway he bought him a different steering wheel and put it on that car.... grip? I don't know. So, I went to the Ford garage in 1954.

Gary: Now that's Kine's.

Hugh: Kine's. I worked there for about 10 years, 12 maybe. Then I went to..... let's see.... oh, I went to the boat factory on Grab-A-Nickel.

Gary: When you were working at Kine's you went to school for bailers or something didn't you?

Hugh: Yeah. No, that was the second time. I worked at Kine's three different times. So, I went to the boat factory. Boy, Don Kines had a guy over there, and they protested against me leaving. Wasn't anything they could do about it. Said, "If this man wants to go, he can leave." So I went over to the boat factory. Well, I welded. I made good money. Hot weld, and all that. When the boat factory folded up, I didn't have no job. I went back over and I asked Don, I said, "Don, that boat factory is going to close up up there." He said, "Do you want to come back here." I said, "Yeah". "Bring your tool box in." I went back in and worked 6 or 8 more years.

Gary: What year was that? Do you remember when the boat factory closed up.

Daddy: I forget, it was before '54 because....no, it was during '54, because that was when I left Kine's and went to the boat factory. Then I came back to Kine's...then I went back to Kine's. It must have been '55-'56. Then I worked...I don't know, 8 or 10 years more. Then I went to Badger Coal Company. Well, he protested then, he told that old superintendent over at the Badger Coal Company, "You're taking my best mechanic." He said, "Yeah, but we need a good boiler room cutter." So I was making a \$1.68 at Kine's, and I went over to Badger Coal Company and started making almost \$4.00 an hour. And he said, "You can't blame that boy for that, can you?" "No, I couldn't". But they did put that down, they recorded it on tape and everything. So I went over there and worked two or three years. I would come home, worked in the coal mines all day.... dust.... and I couldn't breathe, my head hurt. So I kept complaining. I would come in here, and I'm telling you... never wash....11 to 7 in the morning. I would get home about 7:30, and I never could get used to that 11-7 at night. I couldn't sleep. It was so hot in the daytime you couldn't sleep. So before I would get in and take a shower, I'd get on my Ford tractor and I'd go out there and cut hay. Maybe the next day I'd rake it and bail it. And I done that for so long I couldn't stand it no more. So I kept on going to the doctor, Dr. Woodford, up there at Belington. And he told Mavis, "Hey, this guy's got to quit that coal mines. It's killing him." I said, "Dr. Woodford, how in the heck....the best job I've ever had in my life. How in the heck am I goin' to go down and tell those people I got to quit. Can I get a reference so I can get a job somewhere else?" "Don't worry about it." Tom Woodford, the doctor, and his wife, wrote it down on paper. He said, "Now you

hand this to your superintendent and Joe Cannon and your main boss on the tipple." And the one who owned it was Raymond Bolton. You remember him?

Gary: Yeah.

Hugh: So, I went down there and I handed it in to them and I said, "I hate this." Oh, they very neared cried.

Gary: Where did you go to work after that?

Hugh: Well, I was ashamed, about half ashamed to go back and ask Don. I said, "Don, the doctor made me quit over at Badger Coal Company." I worked over there a couple of years. I couldn't take it. Buddy, I hated it.....to take a job at almost \$4.00 a hour and go back to the garage for, I believe they raised us 10 cents, \$1.78. He said, "You got your tool box with you?" I said, "Yep." He said, "I'll help you carry it in!" That's the honest to God truth. So I went back there, for I don't know, for a long, long time. And then I went from there, I got on this farm training, some way or another, through the Veterans. And after it run out I went to Raymond Wilmoth's. I worked for Raymond Wilmoth in 1968. Was it '68 or '78?

Gary: I graduated from school in '68.

Hugh: And you went up there and helped, right? Well, that's the last place I worked in the garage, was Raymond Wilmoth's.

Gary: Tell me a little bit about.... when did you first start playing music? How old were you when you first started playing music?

Hugh: Maybe five or six.

Gary: So now, who taught you?

Hugh: June, my brother. My mother played guitar and sang. Her father loved music. He was a real good fiddle player.

Gary: So what was the first instrument you played?

Hugh: Ukelele...one of those little ukeleles....then I got on a guitar. Then after we got the band started, they had too many guitar players, and I had to go on the base fiddle. Well, it was a base guitar, just like a tall fiddle.

Gary: Now, you played a lot at home, right?

Daddy: Oh, yeah!

Gary: And grandma would sing. I remember her singing.

Hugh: Uh-huh.

Gary: So June would play about anything, but he usually played the fiddle, didn't he?

Hugh: Right. Well, you know, he took lessons on it and he could read music, play a piano, or anything.

Gary: And Gearl played the mandolin, and you played the base fiddle or guitar.

Hugh: Yeah..... Madge played the guitar, Ledona played the banjo, a uk they called it, a little banjo about that long.....and Fred played a guitar. That's the reason they had to take me off and put me on a base. There were six of us.

Gary: How old were you when they started the band? The Happy Mountaineers.

Hugh: Oh, I might have been seven or eight years old, something like that....I must have been about 12 when we started the band.

Gary: So, where all did you play?

Hugh: Everywhere!

Gary: Did you play in bars and stuff like that.

Hugh: Dance halls. I don't know if.....well, I guess you would call 'em bars, they sold beer and everything. But, we didn't play too much like that. Fred wasn't too much on that...beer, you know that guy.

Gary: So you played like Philippi, and Belington, Elkins and around like that?

Hugh: Yeah....in Daily, just above Elkins. Fred lived up there. He worked in Beverlyme and Mavis when we go up to Connie's, I can see a building I played in. That's where we won this big contest, the Major Bows. Did you ever hear of the Major Bows?....We won that contest, we won a lot of them at the Homestead up there.

Gary: Major Bows, what was that?

Hugh: He was some kind of a big radio personality....Major Bows Amateur Contest.

Gary: Where? In Elkins?

Hugh: No, Fairmont and Clarksburg, and all around like that. He was all over.

Gary: And he'd have a contest?

Hugh: Yeah, and we won it.

Gary: Like once a year? or quite a bit.....

Hugh: Once a year.

Gary: So a lot of people from all over West Virginia then were in the contest?

Hugh: Oh yeah, everyone was there.

Gary: Where did they have the contest at?

Hugh: At Major Bows, at the big Elkins High School building. It's on the other side of Elkins. I'll show you some of these days.....and the other one was right at the Homestead in the community building.

Gary: Now, the Homestead, is that in Beverly?

Hugh: Uh-huh. Above Beverly.

Gary: That's a building up there, called the Homestead.

Hugh: Well, Roosevelt is the one that got that started. They started building houses there for people, or something like WPA. You remember WPA, for people to have a job. They started building houses up there, project they called it. Then they put up a factory, wood working. June worked in there. Ah, they made everything, out of wood. So, when I went up there Mrs. Roosevelt and President Roosevelt fixed it so they could build houses. That's why those houses are so much alike. And you had the privileges of renting it. And they automatically took your rent as a payment on the house. And if you got it paid off it was yours. You didn't lose your rent that way. Well, Roosevelt did that, something like WPA. Get people working and everything. Well, Fred, he didn't stay long enough to keep his house, but there are a couple right across the street, I can show you right now, that kept their house. And they didn't only have more than \$20-21,000 in the whole thing, a beautiful house.

Gary: Now, that Homestead, was there any kind of a contest for that? How did you go to Washington, DC. How did you do that?

Hugh: Well, we had a contest at the Homestead up there, and Mrs. Roosevelt danced with me, and they had a contest. If you win this contest you get to go to Washington, DC. Well, Woody Simmonsthere were a lot of bands around Elkins and Beverly and everywhere. I forget how many people we played against. There must have been about 15 different groups. Hillbilly bands, they called 'em, we were the Happy Mountaineers. So, we won that. Well, we got to go to Washington, DC free to play in front of 4,000 or 5,000 people there.

Gary: What was the building? Do you have the name of the place where you played in Washington?

Hugh: Yeah, but I forget....but I can show it to you.

Gary: Where 'bouts was it?

Hugh: You know where 14th Street goes down in this one big circle there, and you go off to the right there. Bear right two blocks, a great big building. It might have been the....well they didn't have a civic building then, did they? It was some kind of a government building, I know that. So they didn't have loudspeakers back in those days. So everyone in that building, you look back through there and they were watching. They had binoculars or something up, watchin' you. They didn't have loudspeakers...I don't know, they might have had loudspeakers, I forget. But anyway, they had it all made up. They called me "Swifty", and we'd come on on that, and we had Gander Digman with us from Belington. He was a tap dancer and a stand up comic. When it come my turn, we went out on the stage and I was always behind, draggin' that base fiddle. Oh, you should have heard the people holler and laugh! And I'd describe my girlfriend. Fred would say, "Hey, by the way, Swifty's got a girlfriend. You want to show us what your girlfriend looks like?" So I went down that guitar, along the long neck like this, and I got down there, and I said "Wait a minute, maybe it's this way, backwards." Make them think she had a bigger rear than she did breasts, you know. Those were the good old days.

Gary: Why did they call you "Swifty"?

Hugh: You know what, back in those days I didn't like to practice.....oh, I hated it. We'd practice three nights a week down at Fred Fisher's. Three nights a week, and I hated to do that. Half the time, I'd miss. I wouldn't

go. Hell with it. I hated to practice. Oh, come on...so one time not too long after we got started playin' I went to Philippi, down there to the Grand Theater. They were puttin' on a show down there...the Western Pioneers, and they were up on the stage, you know, and this guy was playin' that base fiddle. So after a while when they closed, I went outside and I was standin' there by the door and he came out, that guy that played that base fiddle. I started talkin' to him, and I said "You know what, I'm in kind of a little band, the Happy Mountaineers they call it, and I just hate to play a base fiddle." He said, "You know what, I did the same thing, but I wouldn't take nothin' for it now." He said, "You stick on that base and some of these days you ain't going regret it." I'll never forget those words. I knew all those guys.

Gary: So, now looking back...who would you say influenced you a lot in your life? Anybody in particular?

Hugh: Well, I guess June, my oldest brother taught me everything I knew, and I don't know much anyway, but he, I think, had the biggest influence.

Gary: In music, mechanic work?

Hugh: He taught me mechanic work, welding. He taught me everything, and I guess the next person who comes to mind would be my mother. I'll never forget her. Dad....he whipped us all the time. Now, he was....well a lot of people said he was kind of mean, but if you had a whippin' comin', you got it, buddy! No question about it. My mother, I don't think she ever laid her hand on none of us, never! She was so generous, I don't know how to word it...but you know, when I came home from the Army, when the taxi pulled up in her driveway, Dad and Mom's driveway, they were there. I don't know how come they knew I was there, and she threw her arms around me and said, "Hugh, I knew you was coming back, you and Gearl both." Gearl was already back, he got out of the service about four months before I did. She said, "I prayed for you every day and every day." Well, that hurt me. I just thought, "How 'bout them guys laying over there.....their mothers prayed as much as my mother did." I still don't believe it was her prayers that saved me.....got me through the War. It was just coincidence, I guess. But anyway, it made her feel good, so I never did say anything about it. You know, I didn't tell her she was wrong.....boy, it's been a long time since I went over this.....

Gary: Well, I like to go over this, because that's the way to remember.....what happens is, after a while nobody remembers what anybody went through.

Hugh: That's the truth....I think Bob kind of enjoyed going back and talking. William, he loves to talk about the old days.

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