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Interview by Myron Blackman with Anthony Higgins at his home in Corner Ketch, Pennsylvania on 3/3/71. Project: Delaware in the Depression.

Q Just to get started, what were you doing at the beginning of the Depression in 1929?

A I was in New York, working for the United Electric Line Power Company for a while there. (The puffing and blowing is my dog.) And I was a timekeeper and felt perfectly free and easy going anywhere in the middle of the night...the Bronx, or Harlem, Queens, anywhere--I never got to Brooklyn, but I'd go out and I'd take the subway and the streetcars and find these cable gangs. They were splicing cables. They did it at night when there was no traffic. There was usually a big Irish foreman and the crew and I would go out and he'd give me the time for his men, then I'd go back.

Q When did you first become aware that the Depression was something... something had happened?

A Well, I...the Depression was started in '30, I guess, didn't it? And it went through, let's put an end on it--it went through... I didn't get out of the Depression until World War II came along, I guess, and the Navy rescued me in a sense from the Depression. That was '42. No, I think that was a little late for the Depression; I was rescued primarily by the WPA in the writers' project, as you know. And after the publication of Delaware Guide in '38 and a Maryland guide in 1940, I had two or three bouts at making a living, but I must say the Navy in '42 was the real end to the Depression as far as I was concerned.

Q Well, the war was practically the end of the Depression for the country.

A Yes. Don't you think the war industry in 1940...you figure 1940 was about the end of it?

Q Just about. The country started pulling in about '38....What was the first effect of the Depression that you felt?

A Well, let's see. I didn't stay in New York past 1931. I was there trying to write, trying to get a job really in some sort of journalism. I tried Life magazine--well, not Life, it hadn't been started yet--but Time magazine and Saturday Review of Literature, it was called then. Nothing of that kind worked out. So in 1931 I went back to Delaware to Rehoboth Beach where I didn't do much of anything for two years. And in 1933 I married--not to this lady--and went to live in one of the most perfect spots anywhere, namely a big waterfront farm--a run-down, abandoned farm--of 450 acres, on Indian River Bay. I can show you that on a map if you're interested in that. Which was a very delightful body of water...a lagoon, really, a salt lagoon. It was an inlet to the ocean. And rented that farm for \$300 a year. There was an old house on it built in

1722...a brick house, called the "White House"--it was famous in that region. The...I guess maybe the oldest house still standing in Delaware, maybe...built by the Burtons, Burton family from Accomack County, Virginia...came up--most of the settlers in lower Delaware came up from Virginia, either straight up the peninsula or up the rivers from the Chesapeake Bay, as contrasted with the settlers from northern Delaware, who mostly came up the Delaware River then came ashore at New Castle. But I lived there, and...

Q Were you farming?

A No, no. I got a bunch of sheep in and by the time the war broke out I had about 75 head of sheep there. That's all the farming I did. And I made ends meet a little bit by writing articles for the Baltimore Sun Sunday magazine, a tabloid magazine of good quality. They paid I think \$25 an article, and I'd work pretty hard on an article...maybe it would take me a week or two before I was satisfied with it. But you get some satisfaction out of pleasing yourself, even if there's not much money in it, don't you know? I guess you've felt that.

Q Would you say that the reason you returned to Delaware was because of the Depression?

A I reached a dead end in New York. It was a sick city, and I wasn't getting anywhere.

Q Was there a great deal of difference between the situation in New York and what you found down here?

A Oh, a great deal of difference from the style of life standpoint, of course, between urban living and rather rustic living. But there was poverty down in Sussex County, of course. When we fixed up this old house fit to live in because it was unfit to live in, we borrowed enough money to put in electricity, and make our own electricity with a light plant. I had to make our own electricity out of storage batteries. There was no telephone. The nearest telephone was six miles away. The house was pretty badly worn, but not so much that it took money...we put in a bathroom--no, we didn't, we didn't put a bathroom in...now, I'll come to that if you're interested, later, in what we did down there. We were married and we went there in June of '33. In March of '34 after a long hard winter, the house burned--we were in it, and a friend of ours and his dog, and the dog woke us up. We got everything out of the house, but the house itself was burned out entirely inside. So the question then was what to do, but it was such a perfect place to live that we decided to put it back. It wasn't maybe very good sense to do it, because the owners didn't have money to do anything with it, so they said, "If you want to spend your own money on it--it's our house--if you want to spend your own money, go ahead." So for about \$1200 we got carpenters--they didn't have any work. Fellow named MacElvane came down by the day, and I don't know what I paid him by the hour, but the house was completely put back inside the brick walls, which were still solid. And a new roof and that time I put a bathroom in. But that first winter I remember so well sitting there in the old living room with the open fire. And that old house, which at that time was...well, the house was built 10

years before George Washington was born, so you see how old it was--1722 and this was 1933 so the house was 211 years old, wasn't it? And right outside the house was a little walled graveyard which contained the graves of Woolsey Burton and several generations of Burtons. And we used to think that sometimes the ghosts of the Burtons would come creeping in on a cold winter night when it was blowing. But then we never did really see the ghosts.

Q In that book--the Studs Terkel book--there's an interview with a man who planned...during the '20's he planned on becoming a millionaire by the time he'd reached the age of 35...this was during the speculating...and then the Depression occurred, and somehow he became a song writer and wrote "Brother Can You Spare a Dime" and he wrote several other songs. The best thing that happened to him was the Depression. It changed his plans and changed his life. Did it have such an effect on you? Did it change what you had planned for yourself?

A That's a good question. I think it rather encouraged me to live the sort of country sporting life that I'd always wanted to do anyway because it was really a continuation, that rural life, of my boyhood on the big farm where I grew up near Delaware City, along the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal. So I found myself not worrying very much about money but just being a flower child of the time. And as long as I had some gun shells to go duck hunting with in the fall, that was my great joy...still is, somewhat. There was a marsh nearby on the place called Boathouse Pond, and I don't think I ever got more in a whole season more than 15 or 20 ducks...sometimes a goose, but it did provide a lot of outdoor pleasure and interest. And that and sailing were great joys, and my mother gave us an 18-foot sloop, a good solid kind of a boat, center-board boat with a good broad beam. And we sailed that boat hard up and down the river in the Depression times. And if you've got a nice sailboat and the wind's blowing, why, you're absolutely happy because sailing with a good wind--are you a sailor?--requires all your attention and that's the one best way to relax, is to be in something that takes all your attention out of your...away from yourself. Don't you think, maybe? I don't know any other sport that does it as well. Maybe skiers would say the same thing. Do you ski? I've never done that. But sailing just for those who like it is complete...so nothing could have surpassed the, I mean, nobody could be happier than I was sailing in a good breeze. I mean, that's perfect. There are some things in life that are absolutely perfect in themselves, and that's one of the things. You don't have to have a big boat to do it, just a boat that'll take the breezes. That's something nice to look back on, isn't it? I'm very much pleased at that thought right now. Well, there was some gunning, as we call it in Delaware, and sailing, and some upland shooting, too, for doves and quail.

Q During these years, how was this Depression period affecting you?

A Affecting us?

Q Yes, well, not necessarily economically...psychologically, or...

A Well, that's a very probing question. By 1935 I had...I found out that I had to do something, you see, as far as the economics of it went. So from 1935 to 1939 I was employed in the Federal Writers' Project in Delaware and Maryland. So there were only...there were four years of Depression, you see, when I wasn't doing much but taking it...it really...well, poverty was something I never did enjoy, but I was used to being poor earlier. My family had been farmers, landowners of some...of some, well let's say stature and standing in the state. But farming in Delaware had fallen on evil days from the 18--...wasn't there a panic in the 1890's or something, there was one...well, that's what started it; and I'd grown up in a big house on 1200 acres of land--three farms together. But there was no real affluence I can assure you. When my sister rode horseback, she didn't have a good horse; she had a farm horse called Blackie that would get her where she wanted to go. But she loved horses and somehow she got a pony--strictly by praying for it...I remember she used to pray every night for a pony, so finally she got one. And my sister was a year and a half younger than I and grew up with a many simple pleasures. But we never were...I think I was always conscious that we were rather out of things. My mother had grown up in Wilmington, and she was...she grew up in her grandfather's house. And her grandfather was an Episcopal bishop of Delaware, and she grew up in a nice house with servants all around. And there was always some poor old colored soul in the kitchen down at Delaware City, like old Margaret Simmons. This is sort of a rambling description, but you're asking me how I reacted to the Depression, and I would say that it wasn't any great change from some of the privations, maybe. We had no electricity--I didn't think much of...I didn't worry about that because there just wasn't any line out the road to Delaware City.

Q I just had a thought. Did you feel the poverty and the wanting of the Depression more in New York City than you did in Delaware?

A Well, I was in New York City a rather brief time, but I thought it was just a sick city with people selling apples on the street corner. Yes, I think it was...I think I did feel it was worse there. I got down to Delaware and then I was married. I found that the carpenter who worked on the house was a farmer, too; and so he made some money plying his craft as a carpenter, but he also farmed, and in the summertime he would peddle his wares at groceries up and down the streets of Rehoboth Beach. And I can remember hearing Willis MacElvane coming down the street before he ever worked on this house. I was staying at my mother's house there, and I could hear him early in the morning calling out, "Squash! Raspberries! Beets!" And when I employed him, he said, "You know, Mr. Higgins, I remember when I went by your mother's house one time in Rehoboth. I was hollering out what I had and I heard--must have been you...you were sleeping on the porch--and you hollered out, "Beets, hell!" Ha-ha! He'd wake me up. Where were we?

Q You answered the question about your feelings about New York.... I'd like to get to the Federal Writers' Project. How did you get involved with this?

A I was sitting in my living room one evening in 1935 and a woman drove in named Jeanette Eckman, Miss Jeanette Eckman. And she said she knew about me through my writing about Delaware subjects in the newspaper, and would I care to take charge of the Federal Writers' Project insofar as Sussex County was concerned. I'd go to Georgetown--that's the county seat--and I'd have an office there. And the upshot of that was that I jolly well accepted, because I didn't know where the next dollar was coming from. Maybe I was just as happy as if I had good sense. That's another Sussex County expression--I was just as happy as if I had good sense. But anyhow, I thought it over. It did not make such a change in my life because it was 15-18 miles away and I could drive there and so I really hated...I begrudged any time away from this beautiful spot where I could...I had gotten to be sort of a man of nature, I guess, and there was another family about our age in the next neck--across Guinney Creek. And we got together a good bit. We had no children at that time, but they did. So I did that. I went to work for the WPA Federal Writers' Project and found myself in Georgetown with an office and a secretary who'd never been a secretary before. She was utterly hopeless. And I didn't know what to do with one. And about three weeks of floundering around and waiting for some ill-fated writer to come in, and none came in, you see...

Q The next question...I was going to ask you what was the project and the purpose of the project.

A Well, in Sussex County it was to gather information that might go into a guidebook. From the beginning this idea of a guidebook...an American guide series...seemed to have been formed, though no guides were published, I don't believe, until '38...well, there were a few smaller, local guides published beginning May '36 or '37. We published a couple of them. But this was...what did I do there? I struck out on my own. I was interested in folkways and folklore, so I had several people I thought would do that...there was a fellow named Terry and he gathered all the local remedies. He went out and he talked to old people and maybe some of this stuff is still down at the university. The University has this all...the raw material. I think you mentioned that to me. Maybe I'd like to paw through that sometime. There were remedies for everything and for anything you wanted to do. If you wanted your girl to love you, you took something, and if you wanted to defeat a man in battle, you'd take Rastling Jack or Conquering Tom. If you ate Conquering Tom, there wasn't anybody you couldn't lick.

Q Were these remedies of the farmers...the natives of the area?

A Mostly old Negroes. There was a famous character who lived in an all-Negro village, called Belltown, Sussex County, that...let's see if I can....After a couple of months in Sussex County trying to make something out of that, out of complete lack of benighted writers in Sussex County...there just weren't any, Miss Eckman said, "Come on up to Wilmington; I want you to help me with the state project."

Q The purpose...one of the purpose of the Federal Writers' Project

was to create jobs for unemployed writers...

A Oh, yes. You know that, don't you? Oh, yes, you like to put that on there, yeah. Of course the whole purpose of the WPA in its various forms including the Federal Arts Program was to provide jobs for deserving writers, artists, architects, sculptors...

Q What did they...what did "deserving" mean?

A Well, deserving, maybe...there was some sort of standard, but any particular standards were observed more in the breach than in actuality. As I found when I went to work as the assistant to the head of the Writers Project in Wilmington. We as much as moved up there; I hated to go, but did. I was aware that I was moving into what was then a very reactionary citadel, that of the DuPonts. And my friends in Wilmington mostly didn't see much of them because of different frame of mind, different orientation. And for me, and my life style, we lived rather...I commuted a great deal. Drove up and down the state a great deal...my wife stayed down there. We spent one winter in an apartment near the office. I worked hard. I found myself working entirely, practically entirely on the historical part of the first chapters...you know the first chapters of all these books are devoted to facets of life, and some history. But primarily my work turned out to be devoted to the tours section, which was about half the book, I guess. I could get some raw material from the employees of the project, but very little. I must say that in order to satisfy the criteria set up in Washington that those of us in a supervisory category had to do most of the writing. So I wrote just about all...I had one person who was quite good, though...two. Yes, I had two. One of them is Mrs. Henry Clay Reed, the wife of a professor emeritus, Henry Clay Reed, Marian Reed. She did a tour here. She was quite good; I think her work was excellent. And there was an Irishman--his name I forget--who did pretty good work, too. But I not only wrote the tours, but I had to drive all the tours and cover the whole state, watching the speedometer with one eye and getting the milage and it was done according to plan, you know. Everything was standard. But I flatter myself that I had as good an intuitive and inborn and educated feeling for Delaware as anybody that they could have got. I think it shows, especially in some of the parts of the guide there that I took special pleasure in. Also the Maryland guide. It was a pleasure to me, too, because I got to talk with all kinds of people. Same way that you enjoy talking to people. I think I do too, you see. Watermen, and old Negroes, and old white people. For instance, I stopped in Maryland and talked to an old farmer and he said as he stood and looked around, he said, "Look at all this land." He said, "My sons have grown up and gone away and left me, and I've got more land than I can say grace over." (That's an old expression.) Language like that sticks in my mind. I'd like to make a hobby out of collecting folklore if I could. That was a good thing to do during the Depression years, don't you think? For people who had an interest in it. People had plenty of time to sit around and there were enough old people without anything to do. I wish I'd done more of it.

Q When you were travelling around Delaware, I imagine you saw quite different effects of the Depression in particular areas.

A Yes. I saw a lot of money being made down in Longneck during the Depression in a new form of private enterprise, new to Delaware, and that was the growing of broiler chickens. Have you ever heard of that down there? Well, that started in the '30's. A woman named Steele found out that there was a market in New York for half-grown chickens, I guess, if they were in good shape. So right in the midst of poverty there were a good many farmers getting very prosperous. And they didn't have much labor expenses to pay, and some of them made so much money then, during the Depression years that investing it wisely they were among the most prosperous people in Sussex County.

Q From my talking to a few farmers, I've been getting the impression that Delaware agricultural sectors weren't hit that hard by the Depression.

A Really? Is that what you heard from Mr. Newton?

Q Well, it seems just from the few people I've spoken to.... Would you know...in your travels...

A Well, I would agree. I think that it was still the day of independent farmers, self-sufficient farmers. People who always kept pigs. Well, if you have several big pigs and you butcher them yourself, you're going to have plenty of meat. And you can take your grain to the mill and bring home your own corn meal if you want to, and they did a lot of that. And I think the good farmers had some privation certainly, and I can remember little girls running around in dresses made of feed sacks. They made feed sacks, chicken feed sacks with colors that could be bleached out because they knew the women would want to make clothes out of 'em for the kids. Sometimes they didn't get all the colors out of the feed sacks--notice I always call them sacks, not bags, that's a southern thing. They didn't...they never had had much, lots of those people. So they didn't miss it, and they had...they raised lots of vegetables. You could drive up to any farm house--I've done it lots of times--and you get through talking to somebody, a woman, say, or a man in the Depression, and if they took a liking to you, when you left they would bring you a basket of tomatoes, or a whole lot of sausage and sometimes pile you up with stuff. So that wasn't an indication of people in any dire distress, was it? They had surplus to give away, and they were still as I say, maybe Dr. ~~Worlow~~ spoke of this too, it was still the day of self-sufficient farms. There's practically none of that left. A bad depression would hit the rural people in Delaware just about the way it would hit 'em in the cities. Because the...well, for instance, the man that takes care of a brooder house full of chickens is not doing it for himself. He's doing it for a bank or for a feed company. He's paid a salary. And if that chicken factory as they call it...the chicken plant... closes up, as has been known to happen, that man may be out of a job and he's just as unhappy as any policeman in New York or shop-keeper in New York, clerk in New York who lost his job, I'd say.

Worlow



Q When you came to Wilmington, I imagine...well, from statistics that seen, that New Castle County had a tremendous amount of unemployment around thirty-....

A I think it did, yes.

Q What greeted you when you came to Wilmington? What signs of the Depression were there in Wilmington and New Castle County that weren't down in Sussex County?

A I'm interested you like to make comparisons between the two parts of the state, rural and urban.

Q Well, you've had experiences...

A Yes, yes. Well, Wilmington was always a sort of a small town anyway. There wasn't that much difference between Wilmington and Dover. It was a bigger town than it is now, as far as actual population... you know, like the other cities it's gone down in population, as the suburbs lately have gone up....But Wilmington was a self-contained town and I wasn't socially conscious, except where I worked where I had to be, I'm afraid I just wasn't socially conscious. I didn't look....But what did I see? Well, I think I was aware that there was a great deal of misery, but then, FDR's program started coming along pretty fast. By the time I got to Wilmington in '35, the relief programs were going full speed, so there wasn't anybody hungry, I would say. There was one interesting PWA project (that's Public Works Administration, as distinguished from the Works Projects--WPA). The PWA job that I think about is excavation on the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal, which was done pick and shovel by men--I suppose they were recruited mostly from laboring categories--brought by train from Philadelphia in one direction, Baltimore from the other. And they were brought by train to Wilmington and then the Delaware Division to the canal. And there by God, they unloaded from the train and started digging with picks and shovels on the bank of this canal, because there was a project to make it a sea level ship canal sometime and that's what....What a perfect example of made-work that was. Speaking of made-work, one of the Wilmington papers, then called the Every Evening, made us all very mad around at the WPA, two or three blocks away when they printed a picture of a man reported to be leaning on his shovel...a Wilmington employee, and the paper having a strong bias against the philosophy of that man in the White House, FDR, somehow had the bad judgment--crudity--to print a picture that showed a man supposed to be loafing on his job. Obviously, anybody could get somebody to pose for that, and that was the cause of quite an uproar. I think it's rather ridiculous to make such a thing of it, but we did. We were good and mad about that.

Q In 1932, when Roosevelt was first elected,...

A '32, he was elected first, yeah.

Q In a book on the Depression that I have, the first chapter is called "The Gloomy Depression of Herbert Hoover," and the second is called

"The Exhilarating Depression of FDR."

A Yes, there was...oh, yes, and you never felt the exhilaration more than you did in Washington. I went down to Washington in '36, I guess, to talk to them down there, and the whole place was just a throbbing beehive of people who were doing something good, they felt, for the country. It was a really wonderful exhilaration, and I've often thought about that. It was something you could feel. It was tangible, a bit like the John Kennedy...early days of John Kennedy, I guess...some of that...a lot of charisma of Kennedy. But this was something else...this went deeper than that. This was a feeling that the country had been on the brink of collapse and revolution, and well, the Communist party was getting pretty strong, too. I found out when I went to New York to the publishers of this book about early '38 to see about the final putting of the book to bed, and went to the--I think I told you this--I went to the WPA Writers Project in New York on 42nd Street. It was just crawling with I think real Communists. So the country was in awfully bad shape. And in Washington you got the feeling that here was a man of great...well, the man of the hour. I still think so. I think he was a great President, a great gift to the country. Hoover couldn't have pulled it off, no matter what happened. Somehow Roosevelt did. But you think he was...I don't know what these other books say about him, but that's my view of him.

Q If nothing else he was an important morale booster.

A Well, he was much more than that. He...

Q I mean at the bottom layer of what he did...

A At least, at the very least. Well, he was a morale booster because he had the ambience of leadership. That's why he had it. He... morale came up not because of a...simple words of wisdom that he might have had to get out there and work, but because he said there would be an end to...what'd he say?...to fight the...well, nothing to fear but fear itself. That's the kind of thing that he did.

Q What was the reception to Roosevelt's election in Sussex County?

A Well, Sussex County had always been...had a strong Republican cast to it, but there were plenty of Democrats, too. I don't remember anything special about it. There were those who...I think probably most of them would have been Democrats for Roosevelt, or Democrats for anybody else that happened to be that way. But Roosevelt was a Democrat, but I remember the election of '36. Was that Landon? I think maybe it was. Roosevelt won it. But he came into the eastern shore of Maryland to purge a representative...he wasn't about to purge a Democrat, was he?...to purge whoever the representative was on the eastern shore of Maryland at that time. The nine counties on the eastern shore constituted a representative district in Congress. And he spoke one particular day in Denton, and my wife and I went over to hear that because I was such an admirer of him, and it wasn't the only time I'd seen him...he failed in that. He was also...he was trying to purge that man who got

elected just the same. That was the year he was trying to pack the Supreme Court, too. He failed in that thing. I don't know that I disapprove very much of that. In those days it was hard for me to see any harm that he could do. And I do remember, he must have come to be somewhat of a father figure to many people, to some degree for me, because I remember very well the day in the Philippines when I was away from my own ship at the time--I was ashore to run an errand for the skipper someplace, the Island of Sumara, I think, and I happened to be in the communications shack when the dispatch came through that Roosevelt was dead... that was in April, '45. I felt a personal blow, you see, just as...somewhat as if my father had died.

Q Similar to what I felt when Kennedy was shot.

A John Kennedy, did you? Yes, of course, yes, yes. You took that pretty hard, um hmm. A young person and his Presidency...I can quite understand it. He did have a lot going for him. A great tragedy for the country, I think. I wonder, we all do, don't we, what the...what would have been the course of events in the country if he had not been...whether we'd of been in Vietnam so badly...

Q That can be just guesswork, I suppose.

A What?

Q It's just...it can only be guesswork.

A Oh, yes, it can only be guesswork. I somehow feel though...my guess is that we wouldn't have been in Vietnam under anybody, really, as badly. Of course, we were under LBJ, and that's when...our first real commitment there was when? Under John Kennedy? I guess it was. But not anything great as a commitment. LBJ then Nixon.

Q The black population in Sussex County...is that a large population?

A Umm...it was about 30%, I think, something like that.

Q Were they...did they seem more receptive to Roosevelt than the other people living in Sussex County?

A Yes, yes, I think so. I think that up to that time they had been staunch Republicans, because of Mr. Lincoln. Nothing could shake their allegiance to the party of Mr. Lincoln. But I think that's all changed. When Roosevelt came along and they could get aid and help and support and surplus commodities, and...

Q Do you remember...some communities were slow to respond to Roosevelt. In '32 they may not have voted for him. There had been a...

A I didn't vote for him in '32. No, I voted for Hoover. I've always regretted that. Well, I'd been a Republican up to that time, and saw no reason why I should vote for Roosevelt. Did he come in in a big landslide? I guess it was simply a reaction from the Depression, that's all. No credit to him especially.

Q It was a good...

A But I thought Hoover deserved another chance, maybe. Maybe I was right, I don't know, for that matter. I really don't think that he could have pulled it off. Do you...that's guesswork too, isn't it?

Q I'm wondering right now whether Roosevelt pulled it off.

A Pulled what off?

Q Getting out of the Depression.

A Oh, no, I think the war pulled him out of it. But at least he saved the country. That's what I mean by pulling it off. I think he saved the country. I think the country was on the brink of something very close to revolution or collapse. And if he didn't do it, who did? What other...who else was there around to do anything? Well, I think that's a...I think that's an index of his genius. I think he's a man of genius, the right man at the right time. Now when the war came along, things changed entirely. He'd passed his great time of being the right man in the right place, I feel. Why, I have a new book, Roosevelt: The War Years, which--maybe you mentioned that too; I think you did....Oh, excuse me, while you're thinking about the people in Sussex County, how they reacted. This little story comes to mind. There was a woman from upstate who had come down to dole out surplus commodities, and she said that the week before she'd been out in the back country of Sussex County, and her two commodities that she happened to have that they gave her, were grapefruit and men's pajamas. Can you imagine two more different kinds of commodities? Now this is real depression, I think though, for you. And so she...in driving around she remembered particularly going up the drive and lane to a farmhouse way back in the swamp, back in the great Pocomoke Swamp back of Selbyville, or Georgetown. And there she met the woman of the house who came out very politely, very grateful, apparently, for the grapefruit she gave her and two of three suits of men's pajamas. The woman thanked her, thanked her very kindly, glad to get 'em. Next week she went back, and on the way in the drive she saw the man, the husband, in the field plowing in these pajamas. It was a hot day, and he was wearing... she recognized them, these pajamas. They were flapping on him. And she went up to the house where the same woman came out rubbing her hands inside her apron, looking very humble and meek and mild, very polite, but she--being a Sussex County person--she spoke her mind. And she said, "The man certainly likes them what-cha-call-em--them pajamas. There he is out in the field. He says they're nice and cool and the flys don't bite him, and he likes to walk behind that mule with them things on. They're nice." But she said, "You know," she said, "you don't need to give us no more of them big sour oranges. The young'uns don't like 'em." And she was so sorry to have to say that, but she didn't want to waste them, you know, but, "You needn't to leave us no more of them big sour oranges, the youngun's don't like 'em." So....

Q Were people more cooperative, more friendly, more helpful...

A Oh, I think so. Everybody helped everybody else. Down Wallingneck, Indian River Hundred in Sussex County where we lived, as I say, you couldn't move without a farmer loading up your Model A car with a... with tomatoes or corn or whatever was in season or maybe some soft crabs or some fish. And the waters were unpolluted in those days, Indian River, and Cliff Lingo, my friend and neighbor, used to follow the river. Most of the farmers there were amphibious, anyway. And he followed the river a lot, as I said, and he had his friends. And they were black as well as white. They were old friends. They'd grown up together and that's why the border South and the South can often point to some real racial amity that really never existed in the cities of the North anywhere, because people never lived that close to each other, grew up together. But anyhow, Cliff and his gang would go fishing, and they had a haul seine (h-a-u-l, of course) and they liked to come down to White House Farm because the beach there was clear. It had no hangs into it, no hangs at that beach... it was a good haul ground, no hangs into it, no rocks or old engine blocks or anything to tear it up. So they'd fish all night and sometimes they'd stay there all night. And we could hear 'em talking...it was about 300 yards from the house down to the river shore. And they would have a bottle or two and some sandwiches, and they'd sing and they'd haul their seine; and then in the morning we'd wake up and go down and on the back porch there'd be a tub of fish. In the morning there'd be a nice tub of fish; I had carefully put the tub out on the back step, but there was always plenty of fish in there. And sometimes I'd say, "Cliff, what do I owe you for these fish? You've been leaving fish here like this every time." He'd say, "Oh, Tony, don't bother about that. Those fish are credit fish." You spoke of people nice to each other. Well, credit fish meant that I could do him a favor, maybe, if I wanted to. And then I didn't know what to say to Cliff. I'd say, "Cliff, thank you 'til you're better paid." That's a good Sussex County expression which I like. Don't you? "Thank you 'til you're better paid"? That expression implies an obligation, you see, yet to be fulfilled, because there was a great sense of helping everybody else, but also that you could expect help, expect a service in return. It wasn't just granted absolutely without thought of any return from it. Not that it was selfish anyway either. I just think it was lovely, the way it worked.

Q Would it still be going on now?

A Oh, I don't think it would be nearly as much, that kind of thing, simply because the exigency is no longer there. But...and because farmers don't depend on each other the way they do. They go to the store...why, there's a store now a quarter mile away from this place that was so isolated then. And now they can go to the store and get what they want and they don't fish that way. I don't think the water's as polluted in Indian River--it wouldn't be at least in the wintertime. But I don't think they haul the seine for sport any more there, which was just as much a form of sport as a hook and line casting a lure, I think, to those people. They enjoyed it. And sport is where you get your fun, isn't it? Imagine hauling a seine for sport. Well, they enjoyed it and they made a social shindig out of it.

Q When you got to Wilmington, did you feel the same spirit of cooperativeness?

A Well, I...I wasn't...I didn't find myself in...anywhere where that would be apparent. I suppose there was that kind of cooperation. I suppose the colored people, I'll call them, since I'm thinking in that era, would help each other out a lot. They always used to, anyway. Oh, yes, I think the poor people in Wilmington always helped out. I sometimes...we sometimes got together with people I'd known in Wilmington before. You see, and they were far from poor, I have some very rich people I saw. You see, we grew up...my sister and I grew up on this farm 15 miles south of Wilmington which was pretty isolated in those days, but my mother had come from Wilmington and my sister was given a small debutante party tea in Wilmington. And I was invited when I was in college to all the big dances and balls...Wilmington debutante balls. So it wasn't as if I was...well, this was long before the Depression of course came along, but....And I just...when the Depression did come along...I lived in Wilmington. As I say, I was quite aware of the gap, a sort of a gap, that was between the rich people and me then. But when I saw them I was perfectly easy with them, anybody I used to see.

Q You said you had contact with people who had money, who weren't affected that much by the Depression. I'd be interested in their attitudes toward the Depression.

A Well, they despised and hated FDR, mostly. And my mother had a very good friend, Miss Amy DuPont, who was her age, late middle age. And Miss Amy was so desolated when Roosevelt beat Landon in 1936 that she decorated the whole front of her new house, which was patterned after Mt. Vernon, with black crepe. And when Eugene DuPont's daughter married Franklin Roosevelt, Jr., when Ethel Roosevelt married Franklin Jr., Miss Amy Dupont made it a point to be out of Delaware when it happened. She was invited it of course but she regretted, saying she was sorry, but she would not be... maybe she left the country for this wedding. The wedding caused quite a sensation, and lots of people who scorned Roosevelt were happy to accept the invitation to go to the wedding. We were invited and went. And a great many people went that you would be surprised to see there because they wanted to see the President anyhow, and I don't think you should be too hard on them. They were just...that's human nature, I guess. The President's train-- he came by train and was taken up the little branch railroad up to the rich DuPont country near the Brandywine and parked...his car was parked on a siding in Montchanin very close to the church where the wedding took place. And...another time he came to Delaware but I didn't get to it...I'd left the WPA at that time-- it was in 1938. He came for the tercentenary of the landing of the Swedes, and it was an awful rainy day. It just rained harder than anybody had ever heard of it before. And the Swedish Crown Prince caught terrible cold in the rain. And FDR was there for that. in 1938 but I wasn't.

Q Did the people that you knew, the wealthier people, did they maybe, I don't know how to put it, realize the depth of the Depression?

A No, I think that they just felt most of the...lots of the people could get work if they went out and tried. Something of the same thing that you hear occasionally nowadays from the far right. I don't think all the rich people, including DuPonts, were bitter as all that. I think you will find people of good will in any category often in life. I...for all I know Miss Amy DuPont might have befriended dozens of poor people in her own private charity. Well, that was one thing...that was one thing to be a lady bountiful and give food away and get a good feeling from that, but it was something else to be taxed for it, you see. You didn't get that ego boost from being taxed the way you do from handing something to somebody, I suppose. One of the DuPonts was famous for his benefactions to poor people--that was Alfred I. DuPont. Have you heard of him? Did we speak about him? Yes. He presented the state with the welfare home in Smyrna, which has been added to. He set up before Roosevelt's welfare program came along... Alfred I. DuPont had set up a relief system in Delaware. That's important to note down, I think, in this. And Alfred I....there's been a book or two written about him. There was one came out in the Depression years, I know. Yeah, could be if you look that up. Forget the name of it. That would be a good one for you to look into, because he talked about Delaware in the Depression...the man who wrote the book, the biographer.

Q By any chance would you have known anyone who was connected with the Liberty League?

A Yes, I did. Um hmm, yes.

Q They seemed quite anti-Roosevelt.

A Yes, yes...the Liberty League...yes. I believe I'm right that Lammot DuPont and Irene DuPont...I'm not so sure that Pierre DuPont was of that category. Pierre DuPont was an altruistic great benefactor of Delaware. Another one, another DuPont--this is not a speech about the DuPonts one way or the other--but if...you're talking about 'em, too, but...T. Coleman DuPont... you ever hear of him? Born in 1863. T. Coleman DuPont was really the genius that put the little ole floundering DuPont Company on the map when it was just about to be bought out by gunpowder makers of more affluence. About 1900 the DuPont Company was on the rocks. It wasn't even a company; it was a private operation. And T. C. had tried to get a job in the DuPont Company and failed, had gone out to Kentucky and made some money running a street railway in Louisville. And he came back and he persuaded some of the others--it's in the guidebook...I don't want to mishandle history here...but I...he talked some of them, I guess it was....Well, pretty soon Pierre, Irene and Lammot were young men who'd bought the company. They bought it on just saying they were going to... on the issuance of stock. And they raised the money that way and then they...just simple trust of their relatives, that's all. You know...you could...easily available. But there developed a

big feud, bitter feud, which left the three brothers, Pierre, Irene, and Lammot on one side and Alfred I. on the other. And it's an interesting family because there are all degrees of let's say social understanding and lack of understanding in the tribe.

Q How did these people feel about Roosevelt's policies?

A Well, they didn't like them. The Liberty League category didn't like them.

Q Well, for example, NRA or the AAA....

A CCC was an interesting thing. I think that you could find people on both sides of the fence there, but the Civilian Conservation Corps was brought into Delaware on the recommendation of a very rich, rich not very rich, but a rich old lady named Mrs. Henry V. Thompson who had a house in Rehoboth and who was exasperated by the great crowd...flocks of mosquitoes that chewed people up down there. So she talked up mosquito control to the point when CCC came along she got--all single-handed--she arranged for a state commission to be set up and several units of the CCC came along under their Army officers and they ditched marshes, and they did a great job for a while until they found out that you shouldn't ditch marshes, because that destroyed the ecology of marshes. And that was reversed a bit, so the mosquito control still goes on, but it goes back to the Depression days. Whenever you see a ditched mosquito marsh, you could just remember that that's when it started--in the '30's. And mosquitoes were awful and I'm afraid a lot of DDT was used to...maybe it wasn't. I know that the University of Delaware was early employed to guide the state authorities in the use of pesticides. B.

Q Do you think that Roosevelt's policies, the New Deal policies, were effective in what they aimed at? For example, the Agricultural Adjustment Act aimed at cutting down acreage and....

A Um hmm....Well, I've never given that much thought. I didn't farm at the time. My family wasn't farming at the time. I never saw much...I never heard much praise of Roosevelt down in Sussex County among the rather uncultured farmers that I...I hate to use that word, rather...what word is a good one rather than that? Well, they were the natural people of Sussex County. I don't think they bothered to get...getting the subsidies, or I don't think there was much to get for a small farmer anyway. There was the Resettlement Administration, too, and some of the poorer farming sections of Sussex County were declared marginal and the people were moved off. I don't really know what happened to them. The land was so poor and so thin and so sandy and so dismal in every way, some parts of southeast Sussex, that the people would have been better off almost anywhere else, except West Virginia hillsides, I guess. That was part...one benefit of the Resettlement Administration was that when it was all over it turned back to the state of Delaware all the property it had acquired in the southeastern part of the County, and it is now a wildlife refuge, which has served to pre-



*Assawoman*

serve a good deal of a beautiful little body of water called Assawan Bay, and...

Q The best of Roosevelt's...the best one to ask you about would be the WPA.

A Yes, that's the one I was really familiar with, though the CCC I'm glad we mentioned. The CCC built dikes at a new United States wildlife refuge called Bombay Hook (B-o-m-b-a-y, Bombay Hook). Those empoundments are still there, a credit to the Negro CCC companies that did that, as contrasted with the mosquito control CCC. George ~~Werle~~ *Worilow* I bet talked something about these things too, didn't he?

Q I think so. Now, if I could ask you about the WPA, whether you thought that was really a successful operation.

A It was successful insofar as it helped a great many people to live, provided them with the necessities of life. I wouldn't say that it was successful in the product that is on the permanent record, namely several books. The books themselves are a valuable addition to American lore and letters. But the books could have been done with just a few selected...carefully selected people, depression or not, I think. It happened that people thought...there were writers or unemployed newspapermen enough to justify such a product. There certainly were plenty of people who painted and there was even a dance project, I think. It was thrown together in a slap-happy sort of way but I never thought at the time that it was money wasted. No. Even when a girl at the...that I was responsible for came in the office one day and she was a nice plump girl who looked as though she had never been hungry in her life, and she was from a farm near Middletown. And I said, "Why, Margaret, why are you late every day?" And she said, "Oh, Mr. Higgins," she said, "I have to go tend to my muskrat traps." And she did. She had a trap line that she had to visit every morning to eke out somehow. Now, I...I think she wasn't kidding. I think she did have a big...anyhow, that's what she said.

Q Then you feel that...in the sense that such projects as the WPA were sort of makeshift problems...makeshift projects to keep people employed, to give them...

A Well, they certainly were. And they were successful in different degrees and in what you might call the money's worth that was gotten out of them. I think you might agree that the laborers projects were very efficient, would be anywhere...people who were employed without any pretense of being anything but laborers, and they did the work as anybody would do. And it was made work and the country needed made work. I think it needs it now--going to need it, and there are some projects afoot you know, for something of that sort. Nixon says he doesn't want to go back to the made work of WPA days. But I see nothing wrong with a project that does good things. Now there were many of the painters and artists whose

work is still to be seen around the country in post offices. Fine. I think those were good projects in every way. Those people were painters and they did paint and the paintings are still here to see. Perhaps in some parts of the country there were writers projects. I'm sure that there were at least some people in every state that were competent enough writers--some very competent writers and editors. However, I doubt that the production would reflect the man hours, the production would reflect any kind of efficiency with regard to man hours, no. I think that...and I don't say that that's any great tragedy. I don't regret a bit of it. I don't regret...now that I sit here thinking of it...I don't regret a bit that there was a writers project in Delaware that was abysmally inefficient, which it was. It put people on payrolls because it was a humane thing to do, and they were often people of some education who wouldn't...who couldn't have gone out and raked leaves, or couldn't have been common laborers. What do you do with people like that? If they say they're writers, you hire them. I think that if some other thing besides the writers project could have been invented, maybe, maybe better brains with more time could have devised something...to use their talents a little better than to put them into something where they were over their heads anyhow. That wouldn't have made them very happy, I'm sure. Some of them were ashamed to be in a writers project and they weren't writing. By the way there's a good history I think of the writers projects. I think I mentioned that to you. Well there is one...came out about two years ago. Somebody sent me a clipping of it, and you could find that at the library, I guess. If you do, let me know about that. I've had a sneaking feeling I'd like to see that. I particularly want to get another look at that southern writers project job of the reminiscences of former slaves. That was done at the last possible moment, you see. There were slaves found in every state, including Delaware and Maryland. And there were recurrent themes such as a marriage ceremony by jumping over a broomstick. Almost every state had that. In every state that slaveowners...I don't think in Delaware but...didn't want to bother with any formalities, if a man and a woman wanted to get married and call it marriage, they'd just say, well, come jump over the broomstick, and he declared them married. There were....

Q I'll ask Dr. Huthmacher about the book about the federal writers projects. I'd sort of like to get...one of my interests is...I guess you could call it a cultural history of the '30's, or popular culture. I'd like to know if...well, I've been asking people whether they had radios, and if they didn't mind...

A Yeah, why not? Sure. Ask me whatever you like. There was a radio down on the farm in 1922 and 23 that we listened to. That was a good way before...a good time before. And we had a 32 volt radio at the farm that ran off the storage batteries of the power plant, the Gelco plant. And you couldn't run it while the engine was running. Made too much noise.

Q Do you remember anything you listened to?

A I listened to...

Q Two people I've spoken to said...

A Two Black Crows...Three Black Crows. Amos and Andy, I mean.

Q Amos and Andy...and before that Lowell Thomas.

A Lowell Thomas...that's right...Amos and Andy certainly did...certainly did...and I remember that so well, I'd like to hear another Amos and Andy. I suppose there are people who collect that thing still...are there? Have you ever heard an Amos and Andy record or tape?

Q I used to watch them on television.

A Did you?

Q Yeah, they had a T.V. show in the '50's.

A Did they? That was before people were so racially conscious, you mean. You were just a little fellow, but you listened to 'em.

Q I was about 10 years old....Now they wouldn't put it on the air.

A No, no wouldn't at all. Some of it was very well done, too, I thought. I think sometime after some of this awful racial business is past, that there might even be Negro folklore societies who will cherish their past and will go back and laugh about it, you know. I see a few signs of that kind of growth or whatever you call it--ability to laugh at oneself--coming along on some of these shows with Bill Cosby maybe, and who's the other one who's on Tuesday nights.

Q Flip Wilson?

A I mean...Skip--I mean Flip Wilson, yeah. Flip Wilson on television.

Q Do you remember things like Jack Benny or Fibber McGee and Molly or Fred Allen?

A Yes, I think so. Fred Allen, Jack Benny, yes. There was a lot of listening to music, too. There was dance music. It was...there was a lot of dancing, of course, in those days.

Q Did you go in much for jazz?

A I liked to listen to good jazz. I wasn't...I didn't become a Dixieland fan, though. I'm more of that now than I used to be then. I went to New Orleans a couple of years ago and enjoyed some of the surviving Dixieland bands.

Q Preservation Hall? I was there two summers ago.

A Were you? This was in '67 when we were there.

Q Some friends of mine are going to New Orleans to the Southern Historical Convention, and I told them to be sure to go there.

A Oh, I'm glad it's still going.

Q And they trample around, too.

A Do they? They still do. Well, I was afraid with everybody being so self-conscious about everything that it might have gone out.

Q They still carry on.

A Still carry on, huh? They call it...well, it's not Resurrection Hall...Preservation Hall...just an open front sort of a...when you in...and you went in. Did you buy one of the records as we did? I've got one of the records. I've got a record that features a woman who died, I think, at just about the time we were there. She was very sick. She had bells on her ankles, and she would play the piano. Sweet somebody, her name was. Sweet Alice.... Do you want to go out, Yeoman? That'll sound funny on the tape. People listening to that tape will wonder who Yeoman was. Well Yeoman is a dog, is a yellow labrador, and his father's Sailor, and they got the names because I was in the Navy in World War II and I thought that for water dogs that belonged to a former naval person should have names like that. Since I'm a writer, why I thought Yeoman would be good for that dog, you see, because a yeoman is a writer mostly, clerk...naval clerk, you know, did you know that? That's what they call a yeoman (y-e-o-m-a-n). But we digress.

Q Did you get to see many movies?

A Yes...a lot of movies.

Q Did you have any particular favorites?

A I think I was properly pleased by all the famous ones then. But I'd have to sort of think back to try to remember any of them. I guess Clark Gable was a little while after the Depression, wasn't he?

Q No, right in the middle.

A Oh, yeah. Gone with the Wind that was in 1940. That was a little after the Depression.

Q I think it was '38.

A Was it really? I saw that in Palm Beach in 1940--winter of 1940. It was new then...had just come out. That was a trip I wouldn't have taken had it not been for rich friends whom I won't name in this particular category.

Q The reason I'm asking this...well, there are two reasons...but I grew up in a sense with the movies of the '30's and the 40's and '50's on television.

A Did you really?

Q Yeah, very much.

A Very much, huh? That help give you an interest in this period of history?

Q Um hmm.

A You saw a lot of what the country looked like in movies too, didn't you? Did you feel that you were getting...now that you know more about it...did you feel that you got some pretty straight ideas of the country then, or was it pretty well twisted by Hollywood?

Q Well, I took them at face value when I first saw them, and I just got involved with the stories. Looking back now, I wonder.... But some of the criticism of the movies in the '30's, and this is sort of what I tried to get at when I asked people, is that they were very escapist, and that people in the Depression needed something....

A Oh, they were. I think so. Songs like "I Can't Give You Anything But Love, Baby," 'cause "that's all I'm dreaming of, baby." That was a pure escapist song. At least it reflected the times. Maybe it wasn't escapist so much as reflecting....The movie people you're thinking about, yes. Well...

Q Something like "The Grapes of Wrath," just portrayed the Depression.

A Yes, it did. That was a great movie. Yes, I enjoyed that very much.

Q Then there were others...I remember reading "Native Son" by Richard Wright...and one of the...Bigger Thomas, the main--the hero in a sense--went to the movies and what he saw were rich white people in sort of a social setting. And they were...oh, I don't remember...dancing, having a ball or something, and it was totally alien to what he was experiencing.

A And took him out of his reality....I heard something of the very same thing the other day from a black friend of mine who said that--he's about 40 years now--he said that when he was growing up in Milford down the state that he went to all the movies he could and he just let himself be transported into this white world of glamour. What do you think of that?....I have a few things I'd like to show you here about...something about Fan Tingle, this old Negro, but after this....That'll be another subject. We're on the Depression right now. Shoot.

Q If your friend is in his 40's, he'd be growing up in the Depression.

A Well, he would have been born in about 1930, wouldn't he? Yes. He'd have been a little boy in the Depression. So yes, he was... and then into the early '40's.

Q I think it's remarkable that this other world that was created by Hollywood...he would escape into a white...but even the poor people, poor white people...

A Poor whites escaped...so maybe he wasn't so different. He found... he was in a large chamber, namely a theater, with people all who were in the same mood. I suppose it's catching, isn't it? I wonder if you could get in the mood by looking at television in a house as well as you could in a theater full of people? I doubt if you could.

Q I guess it depends on...I think I might be able to because I was brought up on television.

A Yeah, yeah.

Q Of course, a movie theater being dark and everything....

A Yes, it's all designed to create an illusion...something psychic gets into it that we don't sitting in front of a tube, I think. Did you go to movies much at that time?

Q Oh, I still do. I'm addicted to it.

A At that time you could always...

Q Oh, yeah, sure. It was much more...it was very available. And I was speaking with Mr. Newton, he said that they would go every Saturday night to a movie until sometime early in the Depression a few years after it had begun. People just didn't have any money. The theater had to close. In a sense, I think he implied that he didn't miss it after it was gone. It was just a means of entertainment.

A The movie in Bridgeville, I remember it was, and it had to close because people didn't go, huh? They had no television, they just had the radio then.

Q And, well, the farmers just had work....

A Um hmm. Didn't even listen to radio.

Q No...didn't go out at night.

A What did they do around in Bridgeville? Of course I know there was a lot of hunting and fox hunting as they did then, and gunning.

Q It was work....They would have a very long day.

A Well, that was during the growing season. Let's say in the fall of the year, wintertime, they had a lot of fun. One of the great sports down there was fox hunting at night, southern style, where you...they turn out the hounds and then they follow the chase in their cars at night and then they'll sit around the campfire, open-- around a fire in the woods--and have something to eat and drink

while they listen to the fox chase going on. Never catch the fox but everybody has a good time. They listen to the voices of their own dogs--that's the idea; you listen for your dog and, "there's old Dugglehand," and "there's old Rusty" or somebody like that.

Q Oh, yes, do you remember Roosevelt's fireside chats?

A Yes, I do. "My friends..." Um hmm.

Q What did you think of them?

A Well, especially after the war broke out, I think I was around for a year and a half after the war broke out, and I remember him mostly in that context. But the fireside chats during the Depression, I guess we listened to them on the radio. But... yes, I know we did. I don't know whether I heard the "nothing to fear but fear itself" one or not. When did that take place?

Q Very early. I'd like to sort of get out...well, get out of the United States itself. I was wondering if you were acquainted much with what was happening in Europe, or in Asia.

A Whether it interested me, what was going on? Well, the Spanish Civil War interested me a good deal. And I remember hearing that Mussolini's son was a flyer in that war. Was it Libya... or was it...

Q Ethiopia.

A Ethiopia. In that...what was that...what was he doing there? That wasn't the...what war was that? What was he trying to do? That wasn't the Spanish war at all. It was something else.

Q No, that was...he moved into Ethiopia....

A Yes. Well, those two wars were of some interest to us. And I remember reading, I guess, in the paper that young Mussolini had dropped a bomb on a lot of people in Ethiopia and he admired how it seemed to...the people seemed to fly apart like a red flower. Did you ever hear that? Yeah. Son-of-a-bitch did. Excuse me. Shouldn't say that on your tape, I guess. The Spanish War...I used to think of Hemingway's exploits in that war. Well...Hitler was coming to power, then and we would...I guess we would hear some of his speeches rasping away on the radio. I'd never been to Europe at that time, so it might have made more impression on me if I'd been to Europe, as I have been every time since then, but I didn't think much of those.

Q Do you remember much concern about what was going on?

A Yes, oh yes. Yes, I was concerned about it. I subscribed to a Wilmington paper and Time magazine and after 1936 Life magazine. Oh, yes, we certainly were concerned with the rise of Hitler and the Depression in this country and the Depression had affected the whole Western world, too. It was bad everywhere. And with what was going on in Russia, too. There wasn't...I suppose we

...I think I was hoping that the Russians would work things out for themselves. I was sorry that they thought they had to convert the rest of the world to communism. But a great many people didn't know what was going on in Russia in those days...under Lenin and Stalin. A lot of it came out later.

Q Was there much fear of a war that would involve the United States?

A No. We were pretty conscious of the war...well, in 1939 nothing much happened of course. And by the spring of 1940 when Hitler's Blitzkrieg went through Europe, then we all began to worry very much. And then in 19--end of 1940, there was a registration for the draft and I helped register in my part of Sussex County. I wrote the governor and volunteered. He was asking for some volunteers...and he appointed me to register men from that part of Sussex County and I set up a little desk and did that. And I remember I was registering them as white and Negro only, and some of the people who call themselves Moors protested about that and then others protested who said they were Indians. And I wasn't authorized to put down anything but white or Negro, and I think maybe I put some marginal notes in there or something. Then after Pearl Harbor, of course, everybody began to worry. And of course there were blackouts at Rehoboth, and there were no lights showing at night along the seashore at all. Same way in New York I guess, to a degree. It wasn't...and then the aircraft warning service came along and I offered to do something that and got an appointment again--no money and no pay--but to run the aircraft warning stations in that part of the county, and I ran three stations from early '42 until July of '42. By that time, the necessity for it or the fancied necessity for it was on the way out, I think. But not because there was a...they just realized that there were going to be no armadas of enemy plans coming in to bomb Washington. But where we were in lower Delaware it was directly east of the city of Washington, so we were pretty conscious of that. And I...that's after the Depression, so you're not so much interested in that period. But, well, you spoke of the war...I got on that because World War II started in '39.

Q Was there much sympathy for England?

A Oh, yes. Oh, a great deal.

Q Was there a feeling that...did people feel that because...did you come in contact with people who...well, I guess...people who wouldn't go to war...and those who wanted to. There was a great deal of controversy over...

A Yes, there was a great deal of controversy about it, I suppose. I wasn't conscious of having to go to fight England's war at all and I didn't get patriotic until Pearl Harbor really as far as going to war goes. And then it was our war. It wasn't England's. I don't think anybody...I don't really think many Americans had much concern...much personal concern that it was England's war when there was no draft or anything. They just hoped we'd stay



out of the war...we'd stay out of the war, didn't they? I think so. But when Pearl Harbor struck then it was...England's...well, then, I think most Americans were glad England was in there fighting and that we had already helped England out a great deal with the ships and I remember in '41 seeing a whole flotilla of old destroyers going out of Delaware Bay on the way to England...lend-lease destroyers...they went out, a long parade. I saw that go out of Delaware Bay, past Cape Henlopen.

Q To get back to the Depression proper in Delaware, would you say that Delaware as a state was a...and you traveled pretty much...you got around...would you say that Delaware was hit badly by the Depression or not so badly?

A Well, not so badly, maybe. It was largely rural, agrarian. The people in the towns didn't have much money to spend, but I didn't see any people very hungry, and there was relief for those who needed it. I think Delaware weathered the Depression without any great pangs of any kind. What's George think about that...or did you ask him?

Q I'd like to go back and talk with him because he was the first and I thought of many things afterwards. The last few questions I...

A You really worked on this. You got a lot of questions, and you've gone through most of them, I guess.

Q These are sort of...I guess in a sense summary questions. They're not really fact questions; they're sort of opinion questions. I'd like to know what effect this period...what effect do you feel this period of the Depression had on you personally...whether it changed you...your style of living, or changed your goals in any sense.

A I think that this WPA work, this Delaware Guide work was a great benefit to me. I wasn't a typical client of...for relief...in fact the supervisory people were told that they weren't really on relief. They were being hired to help run the program. But I wasn't fooled by that. I felt great kinship with everybody else who was broke, you see. But I realized...but it was some...I loved the state of Delaware. I had it inbred from listening to my relatives and my uncles and aunts and everybody talk about Delaware in a sort of an affectionate way. They often laughed at the funny little state, but there was a great affection for the state and my grandfather was very well known up and down the state. He was nominated for governor one time, this old gentleman I speak of. I'll show his picture...it was in the other room. I took great satisfaction, great interest in travelling around the state. I was very fortunate I think. I'm not a fair sample of WPA candidates or people served by the program. But what I gained was priceless to me. And after the war, I found myself invited to come on the editorial board of the News Journal to write editorials. And I wrote innumerable editorials reflecting my familiarity, let's say, with lower Delaware and the people and the feeling of it. I think that added to my usefulness to the paper a great deal. It

certainly gave me some satisfaction.

Q Do you feel that we....Is there a lesson that the Depression has taught this country? Is there any...or a legacy that it has left us?

A That's a hard one to answer. I feel that it established a principle that when people are in need it's government's function and responsibility to not only give them relief but to give them some satisfaction by work...work relief. That was a lesson the country should learn. I think it was amply demonstrated. If recessions since then had gotten any worse, I...when I saw them getting serious, I have thought that something like that again might have to be done, and I still think so. I believe that some work programs would be a very good thing now, especially for young people, both black and white. Is there enough work? I don't think there is. I don't...there are some sort of made-work programs, I know, but they us--they're all...well, there was the Youth Corps. That was made work...something like that. I think that's good. I think whatever...I don't think the Peace Corps is made work, though. That was to help other countries. But the Youth Corps...I don't know how that's gone. I don't know whether it's still going on. Do you?

Q I don't know. A few years ago, I remember seeing it.

A I...

Q Well, there's not much time left. So if I could...one of the things that I had in mind was that...there's...among some people if not a fear an uneasiness toward big government and is thought of as directly coming from the New Deal.

A Yes, well I didn't feel that. I have felt that that's more and more need for a good strong federal government in this country, and that perhaps dates from that time. I've never been one to fear the power of the federal government. And I think the quality of the Senate if not the House so far superior to the quality of most legislatures around the country...and governors, I think. I think generally though the quality of local government in this country has improved over the years. Certainly has in the South. Look at the new governor of Georgia...some pretty fine people. The governor of Delaware, a very fine man. It's amazing that local government cannot only improve, but can show its improvement by attracting good men and good women.

Q A legacy for a lot of people, and I guess I can include my parents, felt that the Depression has left them with...a feeling for the need of security. That it was important to have things...

A Maybe they had banks close in their faces, things like that. Did they suffer from the closing of the banks at all?

Q No, I think it was just maybe a matter of not having quite enough.

A Yes, I know how that is.

Q Having to quit school and go out and work.

A Yes, your father had to quit school?

Q Yeah, and my mother, too. And this woman I spoke to yesterday in Delaware had to also.

A Never got a chance to go to college.

Q No, never even finished high school.

A Oh, really.

Q And she feels insecure educationally because of that. Most people who do feel insecurities feel economic insecurities. The need to accumulate...money....Did you experience...did you feel that?

A Oh, yes, I felt plenty of economic insecurity. And especially at that time. Yes, I think economic insecurity accounted for the fact that I was a very bad stammerer when I was young. Maybe you haven't noticed that I am now, but I stuttered very very badly. When I went in spasms and everything like that, and I attribute it partly to that. To the concern...and also to the fact that I thought that a lot was expected of me. I was the last male of my line and that sort of thing. That too many people were expecting too much of me...that sort of thing, and it worried me.

Q Your experience of economic insecurity. Did you make it a point to find security.

A After the war and so forth? Yes, yes I did. My marriage broke up partly because I had nothing to do right after the war, and the...well, I had to do something. I really would have preferred to stay in Sussex County, I guess. It was probably a good thing that I didn't for myself, because I'm very happily married a second time. Been married longer to my second wife than I was to my first wife, I guess.

Q Can we get in one more question? If there was another depression today similar to the one that occurred in the '30's, how do you think the people of today, the younger people, the people in their '20's and their '30's would do compared to the people of the '30's?

A I think a great many of them who seem to go for the simplest kind of life would be quite able to take it. I think there always will be some people who were ambitious to make their mark in some other way that would suffer from it; I think everybody would suffer, including the people who thought they wouldn't, but I...as I think about that now, and I have thought about that. A lot of the kids I see going around with raggedy pants...would look a lot worse now than the kids in the Depression. They're not bad off, they're not broke, some of them...well, they're...at lunch, for instance, in the faculty dining room, the coeds were waiting on tables and they were wearing skirts, there, and they looked very cute. But when they are on the campus, I don't think they wear skirts, do

they? It's cold, nasty weather and they'll wear pants, their raggedy old blue jeans, won't they? I mean even the pretty girls that were working in there switch when they...they have to wear the uniform of the day when they get out.

Q But you don't think that there would be a panic? Two people I've spoken to said that they felt that there would be a panic among people...among younger people.

A I haven't thought about it. I really don't know enough about that to say. My hunch is that a great many young people...of the young people who are in college at least...that I see on the campus down there...wouldn't worry about it very much. At least their tastes are rather simple. They don't need much money...don't cry about it. Do you and your wife cry about not having much money?

Q Well, yeah. And one quick last one. Just a yes or no. Do you think that we could have another Depression?

A On balance, no. Too many safeguards against it now.

Q O.K. Thank you very much.

End of interview.