

Interviewer: This is Ms. Sylvia Perry would you please state your full name and when and where you were born?

Perry: My name is Sylvia Smith Perry and I was born in Bumpus Mills Tennessee Stewart County.

Interviewer: Would you mind explaining how your family managed during the great depression?

Perry: It was really not a very hard time for my family in that I was an only child. And I think that was a plus for my family my daddy was a mechanic and he had a store where he could sale items and work on cars and not having more than one child I think it was easier for them. However we were limited we didn't have you know rationing during that time but I think we managed real well. I was probably one of the fortunate ones.

Interviewer: Now you said your dad was a mechanic now he was born in what year?

Perry: He was born in 1901. My mother was born in 1902. And he did not go to the war in WWI because he was too young and WWII he was too old. But he was very supportive of the ones that did go and they knew he was.

Interviewer: Now you said you were born in 34.

Perry: 1934

Interviewer: When do you remember helping your family at that store? What age were you?

Perry: We our house was over the store so we lived in the store. We only went to what we called our house at bedtime and we had our meals there. But we stayed in the store the store was open early morning like my mother would build fires like 4, 4:30 in the morning and the store would open at 6:00. And that was mainly because that's when Fort Campbell people were going to work and they would stop to get the gas for their cars. And if they had not if she had not worked how the store opened or my daddy was there to open the store then we would miss the biggest part of the day to make our money.

Interviewer: So in the early morning when people were going straight to work.

Perry: Early morning yes.

Interviewer: So people typically would fill up in the morning

Perry: Yes

Interviewer: Drive all day or however long that would last them.

Perry: Yes and them come back and fill up it would last maybe two or three days. But we had several working at Fort Campbell as civilians and so that was a money making time for us early morning. Plus we had two buses from Clarksville called Western Kentucky Stages that came and they left at 6 o'clock then they would come back and leave at 9:00. And then they would return at 4:00 in the afternoon then again at 6:00 and then they spent the night there. The bus driver spent the night he had his family there

in Bumpus Mills then he would be ready to go out again the next morning. So she would open up the store because you could buy some tickets there to ride the bus that was another little money making thing for her and that was during my early years.

Interviewer: Now how big was the town of Bumpus Mills just give me an approximate.

Perry: I'd say maybe four or five hundred three but we were spread out right in Bumpus Mills we probably had two hundred something like that. But the county you know the outskirts of it was probably four or five hundred.

Interviewer: Was your mom or your dad always employed since they owned the store?

Perry: Always we all worked in the store that's all we knew.

Interviewer: So the store had you told me the store had many different money making schemes. First you had your dad worked on cars, you had the gas you had the pool table would you mind explaining a little about that?

Perry: Uh huh of course his money making items would have been the gas the batteries the tires and just plain keeping cars running as a mechanic. But then people would come it was kind of a hang out because he had a pool table which was recreation you could play a game of pool for ten cents. Now this was after the depression this was more like during the war.

Interviewer: During the war okay.

Perry: Yes and so he would have the pool table and we had a Rook table we had a check board we had the only concrete area in Bumpus Mills so we could skate so all the young kids came and skated there in front of the store. So it was really a hang out and a good place to hang out because daddy did not permit any drinking or gambling and parents knew that they were safe there. Their children would be safe there so and then he had other items like we had bologna sandwiches and we had cheese sandwiches and we had lots of canned goods like the beanie weenies, Vienna sausage and potted meat and things like that where people could eat.

Interviewer: Now was your grocery was the primary was that one of the main grocery stores in town too or was there another place?

Perry: No we had there were two or three general stores in Bumpus Mills that had the sugar and the staples like that. We just primarily had some canned goods cigarettes that was a big thing everybody smoked during that time. We had cigarettes and candy, gum

Interviewer: Now let me ask you this did I interrupt go ahead.

Perry: No I was just thinking that was we had a few items like that but that was not the big reason for coming to our store. Coming to our store was to get gas and play pool and a place to hang out and have fun.

Interviewer: Now did you notice change maybe slight or maybe drastic from when the war started as far as business like your dad how well he did in the business. Was it hard was it extremely harder during the depression than it was during the war or was it kind of a gradual thing? Talk about that

Perry: Again it seemed like my friends that had lots of brothers and sisters' bigger families I would hear more from them and I can look back and see they seemed to maybe have a little less. Like my best girlfriend's daddy was working he had two children and he was working with what they call the WPA road crew and he'd work for 50 cents a day.

Interviewer: And what did ya'll call the WPA?

Perry: We piddle about. And we'd see them out on the highway and we'd call you know the WPA was we piddle about. But I can look back now and see that I probably did real well in that we were in the store we it was just me as an only child and my mother and daddy were very conservative. I mean we rationed our shoes and we had to ration sugar and I just remember daddy saying you don't waste anything. And I did not have but a pair of shoes and I wore that pair of shoes until that wore out and when they wore out then you bought another pair. You didn't have a closet full of shoes everything like flour and sugar came in fabric bags you used those fabric bags for whatever reason. We used it mainly for dish towels and things like that. But I remember some people using them for making little panties for their children.

Interviewer: So I remember cloth was something of very large importance so did you mom sew any during this period?

Perry: She did some but we worked very hard in the store it was we didn't close the store until 9 or 10 at night and it was midnight on the weekends. Now we never opened on Sunday that was not the thing to do but we were opened till midnight every Saturday night.

Interviewer: I have a question about the layout of the store. Now the store laid on a county road you told me what was it?

Perry: 120

Interviewer: 120 and you said it was about an acre plot and you said there was a pen where you would have hogs and you dad would he slaughter the hogs?

Perry: He only killed one or two a year and then if he had more then he would take them to market. He would either go to Hopkinsville or he'd come to Clarksville. But he didn't do that, that was not a money making thing for him he just had a pig or two that he would feed during the summer and slaughter around Thanksgiving time. And that was just the thing to do that's how you got your meat and

Interviewer: That was primarily for the home for the family?

Perry: Yes for us we didn't sale it or anything. But one neat memory when you would they called it killing hogs when you would do that you would always share. Everybody always wanted to sample your

sausage and how did you season your sausage and you always took a pound to your neighbors and they would send a pound like to you when they would slaughter their hogs and such a very giving time.

Interviewer: That was my next questions

Perry: Sharing

Interviewer: There had to be almost would you say. A lot of families had to depend on other families for certain things.

Perry: Yes and you and at that time I just saw it as sharing not as maybe you might have really needed the food you know but that was. And of course we had the smoke house where mother would hang the ham you know the shoulders and you'd salt them down that's how you preserved the meat during that time. Sausage was put in bags then you would smoke the sausage you'd hang that in the smoke house.

Interviewer: Now where would that be?

Perry: It would be a building outside of the house.

Interviewer: So you had some building to the rear of your

Perry: We had a big building on one side we had coal and that's burning coal and right in the middle was the smoke house and then on the right side of it was where you put stove wood. You'd start fires with your stove wood, then next to that was where she kept her ringer washing machine.

Interviewer: this question might be a little silly but I'm going to ask anyway. In 1939 you were five how aware were you of Hitler and what he was doing Poland being invaded things of that nature? Or was that something the really wasn't in Americans mind at that time?

Perry: Very much in Americans mind that was during the early 40s my memory was like 41 to 44 somewhere along in that period of time was when we were all well aware of the war. And I noticed on one of your questions there it was talking about FDR. He was just the greatest thing ever according to the people in my

Interviewer: Generation

Perry: Generation yeah. He was in fact I never knew another president until I was big I just thought he was automatically there. I didn't know we were electing him every four years I thought you mean there is someone else who can be president besides him because that's all I knew in my early years you know he was in so long. And of course my mother and daddy were very devout democrats but one I thought one unusual thing that you don't see now you never talked about whether you were a democrat or a republican. And I think mainly I think it was because of the business he was in because you could offend republicans and then they would not be your customers. So I never heard my daddy say to anybody the he was a devout democrat. I knew he was but I just picked up on it you know and I knew my mother was. And of course at that time she would have voted the way he voted you know you didn't dare vote against your husband that was just a no no. Because I know later in life I said something about Bill and I

my husband and I would not always agree and I was shamed I can't believe that you would go kill his vote. I said well he thinks one way and I think another and we generally did agree but they did want to think that I would not agree with my husband on how I'm going to vote. I'm not supposed to have that kind of a mind of my own.

Interviewer: Very different times.

Perry: Yes yes

Interviewer: Were about to get to Austin Peay here in a minute and all of that. But that is that's amazing. What about Pearl Harbor when Pearl Harbor was bombed do you remember?

Perry: I remember I remember the morning that it happened I remember just hearing them talking about it. I would share this story with my students what we had several men from our community that were in the war and a lot of them had not been anywhere until they were sent to war. And they were just little hometown bodies and this was a big shock to send them to fight. But we heard from them my mother wrote letters to them they would always communicate with my mother and daddy because they always sent my daddy pictures to put in his store. So you could come in the store he had a little glass shelf case where he kept cigarettes a glass shelf case where he kept candy and gun it was enclosed you know but you could see because it was glass. But he always put the pictures and I've seen so many pictures you couldn't even see the cigarettes you just have to look up over down in there and say I want that one or whatever because he had the whole front just covered top and bottom with pictures from the GIs from home. But I remember one little ole fellow that had not been anywhere and he came back and we were talking to him and we were just in aw that he was there when they bombed Pearl Harbor. He had been wounded he still had shrapnel so we were just in aw about him. And several had been but we talked with him and we said well when they bombed did you run and he said no but I passed several that were. Several were running so we said aw you flew huh. Yeah he was really getting it so I would tell my students that I taught forth grade and they would go aw okay I see.

Interviewer: In your dads do you remember now we mentioned that the OPA your dad had to take in stamps and he was the receiver of these people when they'd bring their stamps for rationed goods. What do you remember about that aspect of your dad's business?

Perry: I think during that time I did not work in the store that much. I remember more about daddy talking about limiting our buying than I remember people limiting their buying from him. And maybe it was because we didn't have so many of the staples it was mainly gas and I guess the exchange of money and stamps or whatever. I just was not as aware of it I was more aware of we were very careful about don't get the sugar and wait it and coffee and shoes. I just remember that we maybe that's the reason we're more conservative now my generation I think maybe not all of us but maybe we were just more saving and scared because we know we were thought that. We were just don't waste anything everything you had you used.

Interviewer: So did you feel like your dad's business was prosperous even though with the rationing?

Perry: Yes I did I never felt that again he felt like if you could afford a car you could afford to put gas in it. And that was a livelihood for him so I really felt like he but he worked so hard I can remember mother getting a little upset with him and would join her when we would say you fix this tire for 50 cents. And that we didn't have any of the fancy pop your tire off you know it had an inter tube in it he had to use I mean manual labor he was struggling with the tire tools and whatever to get the tube out. Then he had to patch the tub then he had to find the hole in the tire and plug that put the tube back in make sure you didn't pinch it or it would have another hole in it. He kept powder you know little talcum powder in there you know so the tube wouldn't stick to the tire I remember him just laboring over repairing a tire 50 cents. And I remember her saying you know people will go to Clarksville and they'll pay much more than that and the only time I'd see him a little upset would be when somebody brought a tire to him to fix but they didn't buy the tire from him. So they would go somewhere else and buy the tire but they couldn't get it fixed for 50 cents so they would bring it to him and ask him to put the tube in it.

Interviewer: So your dad counteracted making money by working his tail off?

Perry: Working his tail off, we all did. And I think they were very protective of me you know they were right up there they were right up front. The way I could help out would be when daddy would be working on a car and he couldn't be inside the store. So either mother had to stay in there or I had to well she may it may 11 o'clock in the morning and she still had dirty breakfast dishes upstairs where we lived. She hadn't started lunch she really wanted us to have a good lunch and she liked to have a hot meal on the table. And so I could keep the store I would man the store and she could go up and you know wash the dishes and prepare dinner. And at night we just had leftovers.

Interviewer: Like what age did you start ringing up customers and what not?

Perry: it seemed like I worked there all my life. I could man a little bit 10, 11 but I remember really really keeping the store at 12, 13. I mean really really putting gas in cars racking pool balls I did it all. And I didn't mind because there was a lot of socializing a lot of coming and going I enjoyed that.

Interviewer: Did your now we kind of talked about the OPA a little bit. Did your dad ever mention whether he liked or disliked the OPA?

Perry: I don't remember him discussing that no I just remember the worries they were typical now aw isn't this terrible what are we going to do and you know it works out it generally works out. We go through hard times and it gets better and then it gets worse then it gets better. It just seemed like it will come around just be patient you know work do your best it will be okay.

Interviewer: He wasn't the type of man to panic?

Perry: He didn't he just he didn't but he just worked real hard very hard. Very contentious I mean daddy was the kind I always said would pay his electric bill every day if he'd known how much he'd used. You pay your bills and if the bill came in and it was I would get to go to the post office and get the mail that was a big thing for me to get to go to the post office and bring the mail if that bill that electricity bill was in there I had to stand right there until the check was written and I went right back to the post office and

mailed it then. I couldn't wait to go back the next day to get the mail and drop it in you know you went back right then and paid it. January 1st he started taking inventory of his store because you paid your taxes you had to get that done right then and there. He didn't have to wait for you know your W-2 form to come in or anything like that.

Interviewer: So your dad was extremely good at managing financially not only his family but his livelihood.

Perry: Yes yes and he felt like that again this was I don't know of any of my friends that were this fortunate but he was so proud that I would finish a grade. I don't even know how far he was in education maybe fourth grade fifth I don't know he never said but I had a feeling he was very limited. Mother was tenth grade but she would have had to have gone away from Bumpus Mills and boarded away from Bumpus Mills and she was the youngest of twelve children. But here daddy did real well he had a farm and he managed real well but you just didn't go away and board. So she was had more education than my daddy but he really wanted me to go to college. I mean he was that smart he really wanted me to have an education so he just really managed I think to make sure that would happen. He really that was very important to him that I would go to college. He I thought of something you said that made me I was going to tell you a story about what was the question you asked me just before that>

Interviewer: I asked you about prospering I asked about if he like the POA or not.

Perry: No it was something after that you asked something.

Interviewer: I could always rewind the tape. Oh he was a good manager that's what I asked I said oh so your dad was a good financial manager both in his family and

Perry: Oh at the end of each grade that's what it was. So when I would I never failed a grade so he wanted to reward me for that for some reason he felt like I should be rewarded for that. And so when my report card would come in and she was promoted to grade five or whatever he would buy me something and it may be a birthstone ring something we would shop together sometimes. But there were many years and mainly during the war that he would give me a savings bond.

Interviewer: Really

Perry: And he that was being you know this was the thing to do this was helping the government. They've asked us to do this and he would at school you could take like a dime or quarter and buy little stamps and fill up a little book. And it was about \$18 worth.

Interviewer: For one book?

Perry: Yes and it matured to \$25 so you had an opportunity to buy these little stamps and fill up a book. You give the money you get these little stamps and I didn't do much of that my friends did more of that than I did so I kind of saw them. But daddy would just give me a \$25 bond and I'm sure he paid 18 at the end of the school year. I remember as a child kind of wishing I had something more tangible I liked my he got me a watch onetime then he got me a birthstone ring and he got me a little necklace. And as a

child I remember liking that better than I did a savings bond. He called them war bonds they were called war bonds but that was helping the government according to him.

Interviewer: Now did you ever cash in those bonds?

Perry: I guess I did I don't remember maybe they did because I remember when I went away to college he opened up a checking account for me and so unless he I just don't remember personally going. Of course when I settled his estate and everything they had a lock box and there was nothing like that in there. But I'm just assuming that he eventually turned them in or cashed them in or he probably had the feeling when they reached maturity it was time to do that. I don't know what he thought that just wasn't discussed.

Interviewer: I want to kind of go back to FCR a little bit. So your family was very pro FDR did you know anybody that wasn't really all that?

Perry: I remember my mother's sister's husband was a republican and two or three in the community being very vocal about it. However, we had like a post in our store right next to the stove and daddy kept the coals scuttled by that post and he had a little mill in the post that he kept a little poker you know hanging and a little shovel to get the ashes out with and whatever. But on this post he always had anybody that was running for any form of election I mean if it was president, constable or Sheriff or whatever it didn't matter you know the trustee or anybody the registrar. They all put their card on that post it didn't matter.

Interviewer: So even though he felt strongly a certain way he was extremely bipartisan?

Perry: Yes yes everybody could come in there get a thumb tack and put it on that post and if they handed it to him he would turn around and put it up there for them. So I can remember the post just being full of these little cards the we called them the elocutionary cards they'd pass out. Because he was just everybody had an opportunity to campaign in his store with him he never said I'll vote for you or I won't vote for you but he was very courteous and respectful. And respected them for running I guess because I never heard him voice an opinion.

Interviewer: When the war ended in 44 or 45 did you what do you remember of that period? Do you remember the community being really like on cloud nine or.

Perry: I remember a little of it but not as much as I remember the morning daddy said we're in an all out war. He said we are in a WWII it is I mean it was like Germany, Japan I mean it was world wide.

Interviewer: Do you remember what year he said that by chance?

Perry: It just seemed like it was the early 40s 41, 42 I just remember him being really I mean this is the max.

Interviewer: He had very good foresight.

Perry: He was very aware of that. Another thing I was going to tell you I guess they call it National Guards now but they had what they called a home guard and the men in Bumpus Mills that missed the draft now daddy he was he had a card he was ranked like at 4F or something. He could have been called but he would have been the last because of his age and he was married and he had a child. Those were things that kept him for going but he was he did have a draft ranking. And but he joined the home guard and I think back now they would go over to the little elementary school house we had and I have a picture of him and all of these men in Bumpus Mills it must have been 15, 20 of these men that would go for training so they were a backup. And he's got his little uniform on and his little cap and he was ready he was being trained. He was just waiting to be called but I thought that was that spoke for him.

Interviewer: Now did you ever feel like it would get to that point where he'd have to be called? Did that ever go through your mind as a young girl?

Perry: Maybe faintly maybe faintly. But I could see the young people that were going and he was not in that rank he was an older man and I don't mean older man but.

Interviewer: Middle age.

Perry: Yeah and I didn't see him as these young people leaving our community going to war.

Interviewer: Were you ever close to any of the young men that went?

Perry: I wrote them a lot my mother wrote religiously she was really a writer. And she could go out put gas in a car come in and grab her little tablet and just you know start writing get up and rack the pool go to the pool table rack the balls come back in and here she'd go. It was like you go mail this letter to whomever. I've got a lot of those letters she saved a lot of them and it was all through the WWII it was through the Korean War all through that time she was writing.

Interviewer: Now how long did they have the store?

Perry: They sold the store in 64.

Interviewer: So they did have it through even almost into the Vietnam War.

Perry: Yes

Interviewer: When did you now there's a question here that says when did you change jobs or when did you get your first job but to me it seems like you worked. You had your job when you were born with the store. When did you graduate high school and what did you do after that?

Perry: Well I graduated in 1952 from Penster County High School and that was about 10 miles away from where I lived. And as I said my daddy really wanted me to go to college and it was kind of like during that time there were like six or more of us that had just graduated and we were all going to college. And then the next year there might not have been anybody that was in a group you know. A lot of my little cousins there could have been the only one that you know was going to college or maybe one or two. But there was a group of us going to that made it easier we were all going together. And so we roomed

together my best friend I was in her wedding she was in mine and we were roommates and next door was another girl I grew up with and next door was another two you know we were just all right there in the third floor of Harned Hall at Austin Peay.

Interviewer: The third floor of Harned Hall that's the history department.

Perry: Third floor of Harned Hall.

Interviewer: That's weird that's where we'll watch this video were making.

Perry: Exactly then I've been there I guess a year or so ago I went to see some of the displays and I went got to go up and kind of scout around a little bit. But we all lived in Harned Hall and we all went right on through we graduated and some of them like my best friend ended up going to Chicago she went to Cincinnati Chicago she'd now in Memphis. Another friend is in Dayton Ohio another one's gone to Florida. I have some still here in Clarksville.

Interviewer: I have question about the difference in you experienced WWII at its worst and at its best I guess you could say if there was such a thing as far as rationing. Your dad had this store you know living with next to nothing things of this nature. When the Korean War started in 1950 you were older you had you knew what you had just experienced six years before, how was it different the Korean War from?

Perry: Well I was dating a guy that was stationed in Japan and I wrote him during my high school year's lots of writing during that time. And he came back the summer that I finished high school and we both went to college. Our just trying to you know work out a married life just wasn't going to be for us so we split up when we got to college because I had other interests and he did too and it worked out okay. But during that time see like my high school years some of the older people from Bumpus Mills maybe three or four years older had already graduated from high school they were in the Korean War. And that's who we communicated with we would write them a lot of us young girls would write and they'd come home on leave and we'd try to you know have them at the store there and we would talk with them and visit and date them and we had a good time with them. But then when I went to college they were still you know in 52 they were still going and in fact my husband got back in 54 and when I met my husband and he'd been right in the midst of it. He was in first Marines and he was on the front line when they signed the troops it was in the summer and I did not even know him during that time. And so he came back the following March and he had spent his time in service and he came to Austin Peay.

Interviewer: Do you think your dad would have said the Korean War was total we're in a war or was the Korean War more like in the back of American's minds?

Perry: I always felt like it was in the back of American's mind I don't think they thought of anything any worse than WWII because it was just a world war I just remember that remark it's an all out war. There here and their there it like it just couldn't be any worse than this it just could not be any worse than this.

Interviewer: Do you think some of the horrors from WWII and on the home front as well as in combat maybe forced the American people a little bit to kind of put the Korean War in the back of their head because they had already seen it so horribly?

Perry: Maybe maybe I don't know.

Interviewer: You don't ever remember I mean there wasn't there obviously wasn't rationing during the Korean War and if there was not to the extent that there was during WWII.

Perry: No it wasn't there wasn't rationing. And I can only remember one person from Bumpus Mills that was killed in the Korean War but there was more in the WWII. And I think that was another factor you know of we just didn't have as many from our home town as involved as they were in WWII. Maybe I certainly wouldn't say that it wasn't as important but I don't think it had the impact on us as it did in WWII.

Interviewer: Did you know of any maybe a family or even a soldier that died in WWII?

Perry: Yes

Interviewer: How did that impact you, you were young how did that affect you?

Perry: Well I remember that mother had gotten a letter I had written a letter to one of them and it what I thought was so sad they were in the Philippines when the one brother got killed and he had just met his brother there. They had just come in contact with each other and then they split you know and then one went away and he was in the marines and he was killed. And he's buried in the family cemetery in Bumpus Mills close to where my husband is buried right now. There's about 30 I think military and it's a small compared to cemeteries here it's certainly not a big cemetery but there's an awfully lot of military with the flag we go over every Memorial Day and put the flags up. Of course my husband has the a nice headstone but he also has the footstone for the time he was in the Korean War. That was important to me and to him that he have that on his footstone. Lots of pride when you go to war you fight and it's a lot of pride your proud

Interviewer: And you should be

Perry: And you should be you were willing to give your life and I think about the one that did give his life in the Korean War he was just one of the finest little boys that came through Bumpus Mills. The memory I have of him was when he came with his dad to daddy's store and he and his dad played pool together. They work hard they were farmers and they worked hard in the fields and he would reward his son by bringing him to daddy's store and get a coke or something and play a game of pool together and then he gave his life. He was a college student a very intelligent kid just and I remember before and I guess this speaks for my daddy. My daddy had retired and he came on leave before he went to Korea and came and visited my daddy you know I just thought that he would take the time to come and sit and talk to this little man. But he had memories of him you know and he wanted to come and just chit chat with him a little bit.

Interviewer: Did a lot of soldiers do that with your dad?

Perry: Yeah they always stayed in touch with my parents always.

Interviewer: They were good to them.

Perry: In fact there were we were close enough to the grounds of the maneuvers you know they would come down what do you call it now we called it maneuvers. Be out in the field

Interviewer: Field training

Perry: Yeah field training whatever and they'd be down there for whatever reason practicing or whatever. But in the evening when they had a break they would come to daddy's store and play pool and just as welcomed if they had been born and raised there. And when they would finish their little project or whatever when their time of training was over they'd go back to post they'd come back down there on weekends to visit. We would just be so proud to see them and we knew them by name and it's almost like they were from there you know.

Interviewer: When you were showing me a picture of your dad's store you mentioned that your dad had one of the only long distance phones in the community. And this is kind of touching on a sensitive subject I know but your dad would sometimes get calls you said from the war department when men had died.

Perry: Yeah in my early days we had the switchboard that was the local our phone would have two rings and a short that meant you'd pick up your phone and the next door neighbor had a long two shorts and a long ring you know. But ours was two longs and a short and so we had just the little local switch board. But daddy did have a line to I think it was Southern Bell or South Central Bell or something like that Bell telephone or something like that. And I remember he had this little sign outside the door and he did have a long distance line and the he could get messages from wounded or even those that were killed.

Interviewer: Do you remember the times that he had to go inform families that their son was dead?

Perry: I remember one in particular I remember one in particular it was in the night and I remember him going they didn't talk about that very much around me I guess it was maybe they thought it might upset a child or something.

Interviewer: But you could tell something wasn't

Perry: Yeah and see also one of the things that frightened me and I guess they thought so we'd have the blackouts the training of the blackout and we had to all be in our house and turn all the lights off and they'd have to go through with the sirens. And that would mean no lights shining and that was frightening to me as a child we would sit real still and real quiet with no lights and making sure there was not I mean not a flashlight or anything. I mean we'd have a flashlight with us but you didn't

Interviewer: Dare turn it on

Perry: I mean you better obey. And I remember them going through and that was so frightening to me. And I think about I had a neighbor over at our other house from Germany and how she just lived

through that she said that was just all the time for them. I always think about how horrible it must be for her about my age and how horrible it must have been for her as a child.

Interviewer: We talked about this a little bit do you ever remember your dad or anyone in the community ever having their car on blocks because there wasn't gas or tire?

Perry: Well I guess I remember seeing some of that but I didn't know that was the reason and I still don't know that that was the reason.

Interviewer: Because your dad had a supply?

Perry: Yeah daddy had a wooden what we called a grease rack. And you could just pull up on it and go up on the top and he could get up underneath it and work on it. But that was in our backyard that was in between a couple of buildings that he had. And you know I just I didn't think must about it that's just the way he worked underneath the car. Daddy did a lot of just rolling under the car he had you know like the little bed with rollers on it and he just rolled under a car and worked. So he seldom had to use the grease rack he didn't use that very much it didn't seem to me like he did.

Interviewer: I just had a thought did you ever know of a family that maybe used their rationing books that maybe used them too quickly and were in need? Was everybody pretty good about okay I can section it out to make it last

Perry: I had a feeling everybody sectioned it out. Somehow I had a feeling that from the way I could hear people talking it they were having to be more conservative than we had to be and I don't know why. Like I've shown you I had a book daddy had a book mother had a book. Now what we bought out of those books I don't know I just remember the shoes and the sugar and things like that I just remember that. But I just remember well what do these people do with a house full of kids or something like that. So maybe they seemed to manage but I had a feeling it was more difficult for them. Now we just had families there that just really lived very poorly you know it was I remember one particular house they just had dirt floors. They had shelter but it was just really a lot I won't say a lot but there were families there that really had a hard time.

Interviewer: What about like scrap drives and or like tin drives or aluminum drives. Do you remember any of that happening?

Perry: I do and I remember them bringing any scrap iron or anything like that the Lou Heimasen Company here in Clarksville were collectors of that and I remember that's where they would take any scrap iron. You didn't waste anything like that now I can remember that we even had the little tin foil gum wrappers and we would separate that

Interviewer: From the paper?

Perry: Yeah from the paper and make little balls you know. Of course I never remember us getting any big money for it but that was like saving we'd pull all of that off the paper and we'd have us a little ball going.

Interviewer: Who would primarily do that the children?

Perry: Yeah just kids would do that.

Interviewer: To help out?

Perry: Yeah we thought we were. See we were trained to do that we were trained to do that. Be very saving

Interviewer: Would that happen like yearly these scrap drives or monthly how often do you remember having it?

Perry: I just remember different ones talking about they had a truck and maybe different ones put things on it. I don't remember a whole lot about that I remember daddy had an old car over there in the lot where he had the pigs and I had a feeling that he was going to take that to that it would be a scrap iron thing. That he would get rid of eventually because he it was just mentioned in a way that I knew he was saving that to take to Mr. Heimason one day.

Interviewer: Would that be an all day event getting all of your stuff and going down to Clarksville?

Perry: Seemed like it was like a community you know like somebody had a big truck and everybody just put things on there and then the big truck would go from time to time.

Interviewer: Was it generally at your store that this truck would be?

Perry: Maybe stop to get gas or something I don't remember it just being right outside. One thing talking about big truck there that I hadn't thought of until just now I remember many many of the families there that had trucks they were farmers. They could put they'd cut their tobacco and they didn't want it to get wet and so they would have it on the truck and they wanted to take it they wanted to bring it to Clarksville or Hopkinsville wherever they wanted to go the next day. But it looked like it was going to rain that night and of course they would have it covered and everything but of course it could still get wet. And daddy would let them pull their truck you know from our front door to the gas tanks had a big shelter and they had permission after we closed the store to bring their truck in there and leave it overnight. See that was very accommodating that's how people helped that way the tobacco could stay dry and hopefully it wouldn't be raining the next morning and just stay there until the weather cleared up. But you could only do that when he wasn't working the store because you could hardly get out of the store. But I remember that happening quite often.

Interviewer: It seems like your dad was a kind of like a linchpin of that community you know.

Perry: Very respected very respected in fact one of the boys my age that went to the Korean War said that he remembered someone asking him if he was homesick and he said only for Mr. Avery's store. So I thought and when he came to the funeral home when my daddy passed away, he lives in Franklin Tennessee and he said and it was a real stormy night when he came to visitation. He said and it was in Dover and he drove all the way from Franklin to Dover and he said I would only drive this far on a night

like this for Mr. Avery. But that was just like my daddy he had such fond memories of hanging out there you know. That's where we all stayed on weekends had a lot of fun.

Interviewer: Did you bring like when you were in high school did you bring your dates there and things like that?

Perry: Yeah they were in and out in and out but I was always working did have a lot I did go to we had basketball you know that was the big thing in Stewart County. In fact we didn't have a football team until my senior year so that was the big thing was basketball. So daddy did permit me to go to basketball games only a home game during the week. If it was out of town I couldn't go it was too late then on Friday nights he'd let me go. And we'd ride a school bus and go that's how we got there.

Interviewer: Now when did he start actually paying you a wage?

Perry: He didn't.

Interviewer: He never did?

Perry: No I never got an allowance but and you know surprisingly I didn't give my children allowances. And Bill was just you know he didn't and they are the most saving two kids you would ever hope to meet. They're not stingy but very saving both of them are. I mean that would be the least of my worries that they would ever have to borrow money from me. I mean very very saving but they were able I would say if we would leave school and of course they rode with me a lot because I was teaching my children did. And Jill may say oh can we stop this afternoon and get an icy you know and I would stop and get her one it being a hot day. She'd get an icy and one day she said something about an allowance and I said when I give you an allowance and your going to buy those things. We'll determine an amount then you want an icy you buy it if you want clothes this is your allowance and you buy clothes and so that will just that will be fine. And she thought about it and she didn't want to do that. But she wasn't the kind that would constantly want things she was not one of those she was not into designer clothes and stuff. She was very happy with whatever and Scott was the same way so that was never a problem. But I just was never given an allowance daddy had a checking account for me and I remember buying a few things from the checking account but not often. He would mainly just give me money.

Interviewer: What about blue and gold stars hanging in the store window did you guys have those?

Perry: More what I remember most would be the mothers wearing pins and it would be like a Pearl Harbor pin. It would be like a little star or something or I'm a gold star mother. I remember that more than I remember any I don't remember much in the windows and stuff like that. It was more of a family thing you know you'd see the little mother wearing her pin.

Interviewer: What about like yellow ribbons around the trees?

Perry: Don't remember that no I don't think have you done any research on that? Maybe that was just that little community

Interviewer: I think that might had started with the Vietnam War to be honest.

Perry: Yeah I think it did too I don't remember any of that.

Interviewer: I was just shooting it out there to see.

Perry: We were all excited when they would come and of course they would come to the store and it was a big celebration you know. We were just so glad to see any GI come home on a leave or form the war or just getting gout you know whatever. That was an exciting time I don't care who he was.

Interviewer: Would they now you say that bus would come and stop at your parent's store.

Perry: That was the turn around.

Interviewer: Would parents stay at the store to meet their son coming back from the war? Would they wait there until the bus came or how did that work?

Perry: It seems to me like that I don't think they knew the exact time and I don't think the communication like phones and I don't think that could be. It was like I should be home the first of May or I should be home sometime Monday or Tuesday whatever. I don't think there was any set time when they knew exactly when they would arrive. I just don't remember them gathering at the store.

Interviewer: So you had a lot of time to talk to the soldier before the parents showed up at the store.

Perry: Uh huh could or they could get off before the bus got to the store if they were near their house they just got off at the house.

Interviewer: And walked.

Perry: They didn't always have to come down to the turn around place. They stopped out wherever their house closest to their house. And if it was a mile from there they walked a mile or whatever to their home.

Interviewer: I'm sure walking a mile after being in a war was nothing to those men. How do you look at this war WWII more than 50 years later? There's a lot of people that say it was the best time even though it was the hardest time of their life. What is your perception on that?

Perry: Well again I think it's because I didn't feel maybe feel it as much as other did. Maybe had I been older and was more deprived of what a older person would have wanted maybe a 16, 17, 18 year old maybe I would have memories of it was really a rough time. But I guess the fact that I had clothes and was fed and warm enough I just didn't see it as that. Of course I'm one of those that says don't give me the good old days. Because I grew up with an outdoor toilet I grew up with cold running water and most people didn't even have that. My daddy had cold running water no heat you heated your water in a tea kettle. No indoor plumbing you know you took baths out of big pans and mother had a ringer washing machine we brought water from the well to the tubs. We had two rinsing tubs we had the washing machine we had to fill up every Sunday. We used to kid her and say we hoped we didn't die on Monday

because she was going to wash on Monday that was scriptural to wash on Monday and iron on Tuesday and that was just the way it was. Regardless of how hot it was or how cold it was or how freezing weather it was it didn't make any difference you washed every Monday and you ironed every Tuesday. And of course that ended up being some of my job to mainly the ironing but she did the washing that was hard. Sunday afternoon we'd start bringing in the water filling up the tubs getting ready for Monday morning that was my fun. So you talk about the good ole days I do miss a lot of it I do miss the more caring I guess the more respect for one another being there for each other helping that I think we miss a lot of today. But that's up to me you know I'm very caring and my neighbors are very caring so I think you can promote that wherever you go and you can develop that. Most people like it they want to be able to feel the respect and fun loving happy times you know we're not here a long time on earth anyway so why not enjoy every minute. And so I think you as a person can help develop that wherever you go and so but I don't miss I love indoor plumbing and I love hot and cold running water and I love you know getting in that tub every night. And yeah that I just

Interviewer: So there's things about that period that you won't take with you?

Perry: No no

Interviewer: Any day of the week and twice on Sunday.

Perry: No I don't miss that. I thought that was really hard. One thing I thought of while ago that I wanted to share with you. During the early times now I'm talking in the early 40s late 30s early 40s everybody didn't have electricity and daddy did. I never remember not having electricity. Now he might have had the generators but I never knew the difference because we always had light bright lights. But I remember people coming to the store to get kerosene for their lamps that was part of his you know selling of the oil and what that requires.

Interviewer: Do you remember that being rationed also kerosene?

Perry: No I don't I don't remember that I don't remember them bringing stamps maybe they did but I just don't remember. I remember people coming to get kerosene for lamps. So consequently if you didn't have electricity and you had a radio you had a battery. And that battery can run down so daddy having electricity had a big console radio and it was pretty good sound you know it was loud. So as a young person I can remember people congregating at his store to hear the Joe Lewis fights to hear the war news every Saturday night you listened to the Grand Ole Opry.

Interviewer: Really

Perry: Uh huh that's what they came to the store for on Saturday night.

Interviewer: He didn't charge for that people just come in?

Perry: Oh no absolutely not. We had that Grand Ole Opry music going the pool table was busy checker board was busy rook table was busy you know and we could even be skating out there with the lights and everything. And that was a real big social time for us. But they would come to hear the radio.

Interviewer: Now do you remember President Roosevelt's speech after Pearl Harbor you know a Day in Which Will Live in Infamy?

Perry: No

Interviewer: You don't remember them listening to that?

Perry: I just remember hearing him but to know that they were all here for whatever reason that just didn't we just did a lot of playing if we could. We just loved to play dodge ball and basketball and baseball in the summer girls and boys and everybody. Ride bikes we were just so busy we didn't have TV the radio was okay at night when you wanted to listen to music or something if I had to man the store then I would turn on the music during the day. But I wanted to be out we socialized out we did things we walked

Interviewer: Didn't sit at home and play video games none of that.

Perry: No I mean cards games was for nighttime cold winter days (tape ended).

Tape 2

Perry: When it was too cold to be out we all played and just real busy and if I had to keep the store of course I had to do that something which would aggravate me because I would have to come in if they were in a bind you know. They needed me badly so I would have to come in from my little friends and that didn't always make me happy but. I think that was another reason why you're so close in fact any of us that meet now we just always say how do you explain Bumpus Mills? You can't how do you tell people about the feeling you have about Bumpus Mills you just can't. You don't know what to say now mother always said it was the garden spot of the world but she'd tell you that. You know if you hadn't been there well you need to go because it's the garden spot of the world. But of course it was to a 96 year old woman that lived nowhere else but there. But I think it's just a feeling like the pictures that I gave you there's no telling how many people I've given that to.

Interviewer: In fact why don't we stop the film and go in there and I'm going to film the big one the big picture and you can tell me things about your dad's store if you would like.

Perry: Okay

Interviewer: But before we do that we're about at the end of the questionnaire portion.

Perry: Okay

Interviewer: I normally at the end of it I just kind of leave it open what you say. Take about 5 or 10 minutes say whatever you'd like to say in reference to the

Perry: Well I appreciate your questions because you have to trigger my thinking. And I don't know that I've told you anything worth telling you

Interviewer: Yes you have you have.

Perry: There just memories as a child that I remember. And I guess I just think of it right now when some of those older people pass away or people my age or even younger I find myself thinking I want to go down there I want to go to the funeral home. And again your back to that little bond you know that little closeness.

Interviewer: Well I thank you

Perry: Well thank you for taking the time to even ask me. I'm sorry that I get emotional about it.

Interviewer: No that's fine that's fine.

Perry: It's very dear to me.

Interviewer: I can tell and it should be and yeh being a history major you kind of dive into somebody else's world and Bumpus Mills sounds like a place that we'd all want to live in you know.

Perry: I'd love for you to go down there in fact I just sold my mother's little house where she lived it was their retirement home just a cute little house. But next to it she and a niece and a nephew living there in this huge beautiful two story home and they are just the sweetest two people. And if you drove down there and you walked up to the door and you said I interviewed your cousin Sylvia Perry yesterday and she told me about this beautiful home come I look around you would just would not believe now you would be welcomed in. It would be you just come right on in here and we'll give you part of this house it was built in 1840 and it was build by Mr. Bumpus or whoever built this house and you would just have a ball. They would take you down to the little restaurant that opens up every day except Monday and Tuesday and give you a meal that you haven't had in years.

Interviewer: I might take you up on that.

Perry: I'd love to take you down there I'd love to just put you in my car and go down there one day. You would have a ball just the neatest place you won't go to any other place like it.

Interviewer: Well I'll take a rain check on that.

Perry: Alright you let me know when your ready to go. Just don't go on Monday or Tuesday because the restaurant is closed and you have to go down there and eat.

Interviewer: Alright

Perry: I must tell you there's a little boy there name Bill Walker. Bill is handicapped physically mentally not physically mentally probably had the richest granddaddy in Stewart County. But he's kind of left alone now he has a sister that's moved from there and he's just got his little house and he manages he's my age. And he walks the road everyday we don't have streets is a road and he goes to my little cousins Virginia that's where I would take you to this beautiful home. And they named the bridge the new bridge down there the Bill Walker Bridge. Now that's what does that tell you okay I remember him starting first grade with me and that's as far as I remember him going. He can't read he can't carryon a conversation with you he laughs at a lot of things because he's mentally handicapped. But loved by

everybody in that community and I promise you if he passes away they will have to have it in some big auditorium because the funeral home won't hold them. I just had to throw that in there names the bridge after him the Bill Walker Bridge. He thinks he's Sheriff he's got a little thing that says is the Sheriff and he's got the cap and he goes down to that little restaurant and they feed him. You could probably see him when you go down there he knows who I am he laughs. He even asks about my husband my husband has been gone since 2001. And but he remembers my mother and daddy and I can say Bill what's my daddy's name and he will say Evert Smith. Talks like this and laughs he again that speaks for him we have always said wouldn't you hate to be the person that abused him because you would never see the light again. Somebody would kill you down there if they ever found out that somebody internally hurt him they would kill them that's just what it's like. You'd never know what happened but that's just the way it is that's just the way it is everybody helps each other out.

Interviewer: Well I'm looking forward to you telling us about this thing here.

Perry: Okay this is my daddy's store in Bumpus Mills it was primarily a service station you can see the Gulf tanks out front the Gulf sign and right here was the pool room where young people would come for recreation. This is the only concrete area in the neighborhood so we all skated on the front you can see where this is where he would repair the tires. And this is the main store part we had four stools we could sit on at a counter for the bologna and cheese sandwiches or any of the can good that you might want. And always all kinds of drinks we kept a display of everything Pepsi, RC, Double Cola, Dr. Pepper, Sun crest anything you wanted went right across there Orange Crush the whole bit 7-Up they could go on and on and on. But you had a display of what he had to offer there. We lived up here this was our house this was our only I was born in this part of the house I was raised there never knew anything else but this place. You could go up this way into the house but we also had back steps so we never had to get out in the weather we could just go in the back way up there.

Interviewer: Now was all of this building and stuff that he kept the hog and the grease rack in behind.

Perry: It was behind that yes it was behind in fact he built a building where the Western Kentucky bus stayed he even built it for that purpose and then later when they got a fire truck and the buses stopped coming he let the fire station that was where they kept the fire trucks and that was to help with insurance you know for the homes there if you had a fire truck and a volunteer fireman. So he used that after the buses stopped coming but he even provided that and rented it for very minimum you know minimum rent when they were wanting to keep their buses down there. This is where he changed the oil on cars he would work on the cars in this area. In fact the picture I had taken before this Mr. Adams did this in water coloring you could see where the exhaust had hit the door here.

Interviewer: Oh really

Perry: And in here daddy kept his car and then he work on cars if it was real real cold he could roll a car in there and work on it so. But you can see the little exhaust there that was important to me that he get the picture of that. One thing that I though was interesting my husband's daddy was Roy Perry and he worked at the Coke-Cola plant here in Clarksville and his job was in advertising. He did all the printing of names and if you opened up a store and you wanted a Coke-Cola sign then you had you would you know

ask him to do it. So Bill and I had often wondered if his daddy really wrote that on the Coke-Cola sign. We never knew but Bill had worked some in the summer when he was teenager when he was in high school at the Coke-Cola plant bringing Cokes to my store our store and probably was there when I was there and I didn't realize that was my future husband. Because he was four years older than I and I guess at that time he wouldn't have looked at an eleven or twelve year old. But we've laughed about it isn't it neat that I've got the Gulf and he's got the Coke-Cola sign in the door. You see the can here and the oil can this is where you could change the oil and that just a very dear picture.

Interviewer: It is a beautiful picture.

Perry: Yeah and I have some of the ration books don't know exactly what this is all for because they all seem to be this one says it needs a stamp and this one had OPA written on it and this one already had a stamp on it. So these that I have there's one each here for my mother and my daddy and of course one for me.

Interviewer: You want to show some of the stamps on the inside just kind of

Perry: This one right here has looks like I can't quite tell it just says ration on it and maybe has some artillery or something right there I think it does. And this ne has like the different letters and numbers it says like C8 and C5 and C2 and some have been torn out some are different colors green and red and right off I don't know what that means. And this one has the stamp on it and it's a little bit different it has 5 and 2s and these are blue so I don't know in looking at the stamps this one was my mothers and it's got about the same seemingly the same colors that mine has and of course I was the child. But they all seem to be the same as far as value so. I don't know that much about what we were going to purchase maybe sugar coffee shoes whatever I don't know.

Interviewer: Well this sis going to end our session.

Perry: Well thank you.

Interviewer: This is Sylvia Perry

Perry: I have enjoyed you coming by here.

Interviewer: I have too it's been a great time and I'm going to stop the tape.