

John Herbert Smith

Former resident of Jordan Springs where Fort Campbell now is this interview is being conducted on 11, April 2006.

Interviewer: Mr. Smith what is your full name?

Mr. Smith: John Herbert Smith Jr.

Interviewer: When and where were you born?

Mr. Smith: I was born in Jordan Springs, we call it Jurden Springs. The people that live there call it Jurden. But since different people moved in they started getting specific and calling it Jordan like the way it's spelled. You know like they call Lafayette Lofeyette.

Interviewer: Jametown, nobody that lives there calls it Jamestown it's Jametown to everyone there.

Interviewer: What is name of your spouse sir?

Mr. Smith: She passed away about ten years ago. Dorothy B Smith.

Interviewer: What were your parents names including your mother maiden name?

Mr. Smith: My mother's name was Ruth Shelby, Ruth Shelby Smith of course. And my daddy's name was of course John Smith, John Herbert Smith.

Interviewer: And your grandparent's names?

Mr. Smith: My grandparents, my granddad's name was John Smith too and let's see my grandmother was named you know I can't remember to save my life right now in fact I never met her on the Smith side. I cannot remember.

Interviewer: Okay you lived in the Jordan Springs Fort Campbell areas when did your ancestors first move to that area.

Mr. Smith: Goodness let's see they moved there I guess you could more or less say they was born there. My mother was born there in that area and my daddy was born in the Hickory Grove area which is also in Fort Campbell.

Interviewer: Okay so it was Hickory Grove and the earliest ancestors you can think of was here in this area. The earliest person in your family tree would that be a great grandparent? How far back do your ancestors go in that area?

Mr. Smith: They go way back you know the Smith cemetery that's out in Fort Campbell on Mabry Road that Smith came in here from North Caroline and that is of the Smith family I am in. The cemetery on

Mabry Road out at Fort Campbell he came in here from North Carolina with his family and that's where the Smith's started in this area.

Interviewer: About what time was that?

Mr. Smith: That was in the early early 18 some things I would say.

Interviewer: Was he a revolutionary vet?

Mr. Smith: I don't remember. I never did know to tell you the truth.

Interviewer: Now where did you attend school?

Mr. Smith: Jordan Springs. Elementary school, Jordan Springs.

Interviewer: What type of school was it?

Mr. Smith: It was a consolidated school. At that time we had a modern country school we had four classrooms and an auditorium. We had two for each grade up through eighth. After that all the people that graduated from eighth grade would come to town. There was a high school there at one time but it went down after communications and travel got going.

Interviewer: So it was four classrooms and an auditorium pretty small building?

Mr. Smith: No it was a nice building it wasn't no little dinky things it was 25 to 30 students to each room.

Interviewer: So that was built about what time do you think?

Mr. Smith: It was built in the WPA error.

Interviewer: So that was during the depression the WPA work project?

Mr. Smith: Work project error.

Interviewer: The classes were you said

Mr. Smith: 1 and 2, three and four, five and six, seven and eight.

Interviewer: Now did you attend church while you lived there?

Mr. Smith: Yes, Baptist church down there. It was two churches and two schools right across from there. The Baptist Church and Church of Christ.

Interviewer: Describe if you could just what Jordan Springs looked like if somebody had been just drove up on it what did it look like. Was it pressed compact was it close together?

Mr. Smith: No the churches and the school they was compact. They was right up within aw you could holler from one to the other one but the stores were these businesses you might call it at that time was

down on the creek and there was one store across on one side of the road and one on the other side of the road and the other on the other side. One store was run by Mr. Tandy Shelby which was a distant relative of mine and the other the store on the other side of the road was run by Albert Shelby which was a distant relative. They didn't get a long so they each started a store of their own see. Like that that's the way it went. They had a blacksmith shop there.

Interviewers: The patrons of the stores did they pretty much line up on one side of the Shelby's feud and the other.

Mr. Smith: No it wasn't like that, it was just the two and they would speak casual. Not with any sociality you might say.

Interviewer: Were the general mercantile type store you might say?

Mr. Smith: Yes, they sold everything from horse collars and overalls to nails just anything you could think of in the country you could think of coffee, flour, sugar all kinds of groceries, cheese and crackers, bologna. They set around the stove.

Interviewer: They set around the stove and checkers?

Mr. Smith: They'd set around the stove and play checkers and whittle and all, especially in the spring of the year.

Interviewer: About how many people were in the area when at the time you were there.

Mr. Smith: You mean in the general area? 1,2,3,4,5 about five or six families that lived in there. I'd say 15 or 20 people.

Interviewer: Twenty people the school where you were at did people come from other places in the area? they called a consolidation of what they call county school. Well when they had that then they give us a big modern bus. It was about a 1938 I think bus and I made two runs it would run to the east of us and to the west of us, west of Jordan Springs. It had a route it picked up in the morning and carried them back in the afternoon. It reversed its route in the afternoon from the way it ran in the morning.

Interviewer: Was it pretty easy to get into town into Clarksville when you had to get there?

Mr. Smith: Yes, the roads were good I mean yes, the roads were good.

Interviewer: The roads were paved?

Mr. Smith: No, no paved roads. The only electricity in the area was in the school and the store. There was no electricity out there where I lived out Lafayette and all until you got way on up Lafayette Road.

Interviewer: So you guys hadn't had rural electrification yet, TVA hadn't come in there.

Interviewer: Did you have indoor plumbing?

Mr. Smith: No, no nothing like that. We had an outdoor house and an outhouse and you had either a cistern or well.

Interviewer: Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Smith: Yes, I had, thee was six of us. I'm the only one left.

Interviewer: What did you all do for fun? How did you keep yourself busy?

Mr. Smith: You just made your fun whatever you wanted to do just did what you wanted to do this and that. Children back then didn't have all these games and gadget and such they'd make their fun out of anything.

Interviewer: So you just out there active bet it was hard to keep you indoors.

Mr. Smith: Well we worked a whole lot too. Kids worked then all kids worked on the farm them.

Interviewer: So you worked on the farm?

Mr. Smith: Yes.

Interviewer: About how many acres?

Mr. Smith: I believe we had 177 acres I think.

Interviewer: 177 acres.

Mr. Smith: Yes and we used mules we didn't have tractors we most of the time had two pair of mules we worked the farm with.

Interviewer: Two pair of mules. Any other livestock?

Mr. Smith: Yes, we had cows not cattle and milk cows we had two or three milk cows. We used them to sell cream and stuff like that and used the milk to supply the house.

Interviewer: Now did you sell your product to the local dairy?

Mr. Smith: They picked them up there'd be a creamery run and a creamy truck would come up and pick up the cream. You set it down and they would come by and pick it up.

Interviewer: Other than livestock what kind of crops did you have?

Mr. Smith: We had tobacco, hay, wheat and always had a great big garden of all kind. We raised everything we eat.

Interviewer: Did you regularly rotate the crop and different fields?

Mr. Smith: Yes, we raised hogs we killed anywhere from three to five or six hogs a year?

Interviewer: Was there a 4-H active in this area?

Mr. Smith: A 4-H yes they used to come to school down there.

Interviewer: Did you ever have livestock up for judging?

Mr. Smith: Yes, I had one 4-H pig he got up to be top hog at that time I don't remember what the weight was. Mine weighted about 185 or 90 pounds at that time. I won second prize for him, I never will forget that. I walked from the old stock yard which was out here on Kraft Street at the time from their down to First National Bank to get my second prize money. And it was \$2.75 is what it was. I walked by foot back downtown then on down to catch my ride back home in the pickup truck from their home.

Interviewer: How long a walk was that?

Mr. Smith: Well from Kraft Street uptown you can figure that out, at least two miles a mile and a half each way.

Interviewer: Sounds like you had quite a full life.

Mr. Smith: We did it was good living. I don't grip about my living at all.

Interviewer: Now during the depression was that did it affect your family any.

Mr. Smith: We was right, you see some of us children was born the older children were born prior to the depression. I was born in 26 see 1926 so I was born in the depression but I wasn't old enough to realize until I got on up to some age 9 or 10 years old. Read about so much of it.

Interviewer: For the most part the farmers out there were doing okay?

Mr. Smith: Well they weren't making any money or anything I'll say that but they was surviving. They didn't have any money nobody didn't have any money then.

Interviewer: It defiantly I'm amazed the people that would say if I had a nickel that was a major event.

Mr. Smith: Yeh, I've left home from my house down to Jordan Spring which was a mile or mile and a half something like that and get a dime to go town to the store and spend and get the extra. A lot of time mother would send us down to the store with a dozen eggs to get say baking soda or something and say you can have the penny that's left over or something.

Interviewer: Now for a penny what kind of candy did that get?

Mr. Smith: You're get suckers and them coconut balls they used to be awful good they were about the size of a half dollar or something like that wrapped in paper.

Interviewer: This is written by a guy right here in Clarksville, came back from his little exile in Paris after WWI and wrote this right here. Where were we at. Now you had a whole way of life out there that you

had grown up with at that time. I imagine the family had an attachment to the land. It was pretty strong. When did you first get the word that the government was going to acquire it?

Mr. Smith: It was in the late 40s, or early 41, 40 or 41 somewhere in there. There was some talk of it in the early 40s I know but when it comes down to really final I believe we had to be out of there in 41. I believe we got the word in 40 and we had to be out for sure by 41 the end of the year.

Interviewer: From what I understand they had started talking about this and Washington D.C. it was the topic of conversation in 1935 or so. So there was a while leading up to it. How did you find out about it was it when the surveyors showed up?

Mr. Smith: It come out in the paper I believe it come out in the paper at that time then word just go passed around. Then the appraisers come around and they appraised your property. At that time my daddy didn't see fit to take what they offered him the first time so he hung out for a little while longer and got a little more, not a whole lot.

Interviewer: I guess the situation where the prices started going up a little as the word came out.

Mr. Smith: Oh yeh, land boom came up here you couldn't buy a place like we had for that kind of money but it was fair prices as far as market value for the land until the boom hit you know.

Interviewer: Now did they give you an official notice of some kind? Did somebody come and present you papers.

Mr. Smith: Yeh, they gave him official notice papers to be out on such and such a day.

Interviewer: Now what of the properly were you all lowed you take with you?

Mr. Smith: Nothing other than your belongings and that was all.

Interviewer: That was just it your furniture.

Mr. Smith: Yeh, your household furniture and your tools and farm tools and stuff like that you know.

Interviewer: Did anybody try to take the buildings or take the materials from the buildings?

Mr. Smith: Some of them might have later on I don't know. Seems like some people did go in there and salvage some buildings and bid on them for a little of nothing. And the salvaged some of them but most of them they just run through with them tanks and things.

Interviewer: No the land that Fort Campbell sits if I understand right that was some of the best farm land in the four county area.

Mr. Smith: Yeh that's right all the building area at Fort Campbell is the best property that it was.

Interviewer: Now did your dad take part in that petition they did to try and get them to move the base further east?

Mr. Smith: I don't remember it if he did. I never knew anything about it.

Interviewer: There was a petition to try and get them to do it just because they would lose the they wanted to try to move it to where the land was less valuable. But the purpose of the base as I understand it was for armory training. It was the terrain.

Mr. Smith: It was on the water supply, Boiling Springs, where the water supply came from the was one of the main factors the was the water supply. See when I worked at Fort Campbell the boys at the water plant told me they could treat they told me a million gallons a day's supply or something like that. For a lot less than they could what came out of the spring then they could purchase what come out of the Red River for a lot less you see. The Boiling Springs thing was the one thing that drewed made a lot of .

Interviewer: Now out in the area where your piece of property was I imagine it wasn't all wood land. Was it farm land or wood land?

Mr. Smith: Farmland and woodland a mixture of all.

Interviewer: Were there particular places on your property that were just really beautiful that you used to just like to go to?

Mr. Smith: Nothing of that nature and all. We used to go to the creeks swimming when we was a kid and such as that.

Interviewer: Where did they relocate you to or where did the family relocate.

Mr. Smith: Let's see they relocated them across the river. I can't remember that country road they relocated on they didn't stay there long. They moved from there back to town, back to town. And bought a small house over there on Central Avenue and then the family was going down the girls were all getting married and this and that and the family was begin to spread out you know and we lived on Central then.

Interviewer: Now that's a pretty big change of life to go from being a farmer to living in town.

Mr. Smith: Right

Interviewer: What type was your dad able to get after that?

Mr. Smith: He never did, he went to Detroit and worked a while then he worked here he went to the loose floors and worked a while. You know being a farmer you don't have many trades of course he was on up in years and had got in bad health. He wasn't able to do outside labor you know.

Interviewer: Now how big of a change did this entail for you I mean how did you feel through all of this at the age you were?

Mr. Smith: Well really at the age I was it didn't bother me too much. I don't think it bothered the young people like it did the older people. Some of the older people really took it serious but the greater majority of them didn't pay any attention to it. They just took it as it was their ball of yard in other words they had to spin from it in other words.

Interviewer: Was there anybody you knew that tried to fight it?

Mr. Smith: Well I can't remember at the time. There was some, some older people that they had to go in and just insist they move out. But I can't remember who they was now it's been so long.

Interviewer: Now you've worked on the post for a number of years.

Mr. Smith: Right, hunted on it too, hunted on it.

Interviewer: Did you ever feel compulsion to go back and take a look?

Mr. Smith: Oh I've been on it I've been back to the old home place lots of time.

Interviewer: Lots of times? And when you went back?

Mr. Smith: A lot of things changed see. It's grown up a whole lot and it's not exactly like you remember it was but I can find the fence row where the fence line was and can tell who lived there and who lives here and who lived here. The my brother and I used to hunt out there all the time and you'd sometimes you'd feel kind of crazy or something you'd wake and you'd say well I'm standing right here in front of so and so's yard, you'd be rabbit hunting you know and the dog would be running and you'd say well I'm standing here in Mr. so and so's yard goodness and you'd get flash backs like that.

Interviewer: Now, when you were about how old at this point? Let's see you said you were born in 26 so you would have been about 15 years old. Did you have to start helping the family as far as going out and getting a job in town?

Mr. Smith: Yeh, I worked, I worked. I went to school too. I worked at Fort Campbell as a laborer when they was building it. I made .45 cents an hour. That was the most money I'd made in my life.

Interviewer: 45 cents an hour that seemed pretty good at the time.

Mr. Smith: Yeh it was big money at that time.

Interviewer: Now did that help people to kind of get used to the transition?

Mr. Smith: I'm sure it helped over but you know at that particular time there was transitions going on everywhere it wasn't just the county, the whole country was beginning to come up from the depression was coming up from the depression and everything.

Interviewer: So the war years for you they were kind of being able to make a little bit of money.

Mr. Smith: Yeh, all the time I was going to school, high, school, all the time I was going to high school and everything I worked I always worked somewhere I worked at the back then kids used to work at the post office during Christmas time and I worked at the post office and I'd work at these little restaurants and I'd work at the clothing stores and anywhere I could pick up a dollar I would find me a job.

Interviewer: Were the war years pretty good for Clarksville as far as was there a little more money in the town.

Mr. Smith: Oh yeh because of the GI population out there the soldier population. Every house there was in town that was for rent was rented wasn't any place you couldn't find anyplace. People was living in apartments they called them apartments and they wasn't anything but a one room and an outhouse probably. There were as many outhouses in the city of Clarksville then.

Interviewer: So you joined the military in I guess it would have been in 1954. Had you gone to college before then?

Mr. Smith: I had attended some college. I had attended I had about a year and a half or two years of college.

Interviewer: So in 54 you'd been.

Mr. Smith: See I was drafted late and I was drafted twice. I was drafted in 1944 in the Navy out of high school and they didn't keep me but just long enough to screw up a semester in school. Then I come back and went back to high school and they re-drafted me then in 1954.

Interviewer: So in 44 they drafted you then brought you to training?

Mr. Smith: I was in the Navy and went to Great Lakes Illinois.

Interviewer: You went to Great Lakes in Chicago and they trained you?

Mr. Smith: No I had started to train and then they rejected me physically and then I come back out and went back to school went back to high school. I didn't do any training I just stayed but about a month.

Interviewer: So you hadn't finished high school yet but they drafted you anyway?

Mr. Smith: Yeh

Interviewer: Wow. So then you came out of that you'd bitten the bullet on that one and what were the circumstances of you getting drafted then in 54?

Mr. Smith: They just called up and said you're going. And I went in the Army that time.

Interviewer: So you were in the United States Army and you were stationed?

Mr. Smith: Fort Gordon, I spent the whole time there. I spent basic and what do you call that, I forgot what you call it.

Interviewer: Advanced training?

Mr. Smith: Advanced training and I was in the Sigma Core and was an instructor in the Sigma Core. Because I had done had already been doing line work see and they picked me up and put me as an instructor.

Interviewer: And you stayed until 56 and came back to Clarksville?

Mr. Smith: Right and went back to work on construction.

Interviewer: It never occurred to you that you could go anyplace else other than this area.

Mr. Smith: Oh I worked all around yeh I worked in Florida, Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky, Georgia. I worked all around with construction you move all around see.

Interviewer: Do you have any pictures of your old homestead back there in Fort Campbell, in Jordon Springs?

Mr. Smith: I, no right off hand I don't.

Interviewer: You don't have any pictures back in that day?

Mr. Smith: No, right off hand I don't. It would be a problem for me to find them if we did.

Interviewer: Now had you ever run into other people who lived out in those

Mr. Smith: Oh yeh I run into them every day nearly. Yeh nearly every day I run into people that I was that come out of the area down there where I lived.

Interviewer: So basically most people stayed her.

Mr. Smith: Yeh that's right.

Interviewer: Just made the adjustment. That's pretty amazing. Well sir I think you o much this has been very informative. It was a pleasure to kind of take a look at that through your eyes for a while and you were very descriptive and I think it will be and education one of these days when they get around to writing the story of that whole period.

Mr. Smith: Are you going to write this up?

Interviewer: Now this will be transcribed. The tape it will be saved , it will be put on cd and saved at the museum and in turn each one of these will in turn be transcribed and be made available probably on the Smithsonian website.

Mr. Smith: I'd just like to have a copy or hear it or something.

Interviewer: You know I would be more than happy to put a copy on a cd for you. Do you have a dvd player.

Mr. Smith: Yes

Interviewer: Okay, I'll get it put on DVD for you through our audio visual department and you'll get a copy.

Mr. Smith: Well I certainly would appreciate that.