

PRESERVE THE AREA'S RURAL QUALITIES
(PARQ)

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
WITH
NORMAGINE HALEY AND
POLLY CAMPBELL

MARCH 7, 2012
MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE

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UNDER THE DIRECTION OF
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NORMAGINE HALEY AND POLLY CAMPBELL

Margaret Normagine Root Haley and Georgia Mae “Polly” Root Campbell are the daughters of George and Margaret Root of Readyville, Tennessee. Both were born away from Readyville while their father worked on bridge construction, Normagine in 1925 and Polly in 1928, but their family moved back to the town in 1931 before Normagine started school. They grew up there and have many fond memories of the town, its people, the mill, and the post office where their mother served as postmaster from 1937 until 1960. They have lived in or around Readyville for most of their lives, except for the thirty years that Normagine lived in other towns and states with her husband and the short time that Polly lived in Knoxville while she was attaining her bachelor’s degree in agriculture from the University of Tennessee. Normagine has four children, and Polly has three children. Not all of them still live nearby, but they love to come home and visit Readyville and the Readyville Mill. Normagine, Polly, and their families love their small town and have always considered it home no matter where they have been.

INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

The Root sisters (Normagine and Polly) grew up mostly in Readyville, Tennessee and spent much of their time with their friends at the dam near the mill and at their father's general merchandise store in the town. In this interview, they discuss how their mother and father met and married, where and when each of them were born, and what life was like as young girls in Readyville in the 1930s and beyond. They discuss their family's background in farming along with their father's work with bridge construction and then as an engineer for the Tennessee Valley Authority. Their mother served as the postmaster for Readyville throughout their childhood as well, and they have many fond memories of their mother working in the post office, which was adjacent to their father's store. Polly and Normagine also discuss their husbands and children along with the times that they lived away from Readyville, which was quite a while for Normagine and just long enough to go to college for Polly.

Normagine and Polly remember many happenings in the town of Readyville in this interview. They discuss how they would spend all summer swimming at the dam and how they would go to the neighboring town of Woodbury to watch movies. They remember the times of the Great Depression in the town and World War II, which brought military maneuvers into Tennessee and army tanks carrying men doing those maneuvers along the main road on which the post office was located. They also remember when schools were segregated and then when they were later integrated in their town. They were close to and remembered a few African American women who worked for their family for a while before World War II. They saw Readyville and Tennessee go through many changes over the years.

In direct relation to the Readyville Mill, Polly and Normagine discuss several topics. The mill owner they knew best was Leslie Justice, and they have wonderful memories of him and his family. Though they did not spend much time inside the mill growing up, their family did live in a house very close to the mill, and they played in the fields and water around the mill. They now eat frequently at the mill on Saturdays when there is live music and a fresh breakfast, and they make a point to take their children there when they visit. The town and the mill mean a lot to both Normagine and Polly, and they express in the interview how glad they are to see it being restored and coming back to life. They still live very near Readyville, and they regularly shop and spend time in the town and with its people.

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Lauren Baud: This is Lauren Baud. I'm here with Normagine Haley and Polly Campbell in the Albert Gore Research Center at Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. It is March 7, 2012. This interview is for Preserve the Area's Rural Qualities, a non-profit organization that is interested in preserving the history of Readyville, Tennessee and the Readyville Mill. Do I have your permission to record this interview?

Normagine Haley: Yes.

Polly Campbell: Yes.

LB: Thank you. All right. So let's start with you Normagine. Where are you originally from?

NH: I was born in New Hope, Alabama where my mother and father was on bridge construction.

LB: Oh okay. So how did your family end up in Tennessee?

NH: My mother was born at Readyville in 1905.

LB: Alright. So is your family – besides you being in Alabama – is a long history of being in Tennessee then?

NH: Yes.

LB: Okay. All right. Were you born here in Tennessee Polly?

PC: No. I was born – well, in Tennessee – but I was born in Jackson, Tennessee because that's where Daddy was working at that time.

LB: Um-hmm. What was your father's name?

PC: George L. Root.

LB: What did he do for work?

PC: At that time he was on bridge construction. He started out with his father.

LB: Okay. All right. What year did your family move back to Readyville?

PC: 1931.

LB: All right. You said that your parents owned a store there in Readyville, right?

PC: Yes.

LB: Um-hmm. What kind of store was that?

PC: Just a general merchandise store. Groceries, little of— feeds, anything that people in the country like that would want.

LB: Okay. So what was the name of that store?

PC: George Root's General Merchandise Store.



LB: Okay. All right. Did he get things from the Readyville Mill? Did the mill provide flour and things like that?

PC: Yeah. Yes. Yeah.

LB: Um-hmm. All right. For either one of you— what are your earliest memories of the Readyville Mill?

NH: The people going and coming with the grain that they took to the mill in the fall when they thrashed the wheat. Also corn for the cattle— when they took it down there. So with us being in the grocery store and the post office there, we saw the men coming and going. Or they would stop at the store for what they needed.

LB: All right. So did a lot of women come around the mill, or was it mostly men who went there?

NH: As far as I remember, it was strictly men. I mean, don't remember the women coming to the store much. Do you Polly?

PC: Well, sometimes, yes. For their groceries and things.

NH: But mostly it was the men that were—

PC: It was the men that come and sit.

NH: Yeah. (laughs)

PC: And talk and gather. Yes. Yeah, so. Of course women would come for things that they needed.

LB: Um-hmm. So would you all use flour and grain from the Readyville Mill?

NH: Oh yes. Uh-huh. Our grandfather, he was only living about what—a half a mile away, farming?

PC: I don't know. It's in sight of the road there.

NH: Yeah. He would take his grain down there to—and then they stored it. The mill got a certain percent, and then the men got a certain percent of flour and meal and things that they needed during the year then. It was on a percentage basis is the way I understood it. Or maybe they sold the mill things [wheat and corn] that they did not need. The funny part was people bringing eggs [to the store] and trading—

LB: Oh.

NH: And bringing chickens and trading them in for their groceries.

PC: At the store.

NH: Uh-huh.

LB: How much could they get for a chicken? What could they usually trade that for? (laughs)

NH: I think Mr. Hollandsworth started out paying so much a chicken, didn't he?

PC: I have no idea about that. I just remember where they kept them. (Lauren laughs)

NH: There was a hole in the floor and a pen under the floor that they dropped the chickens in. (all laugh)

LB: Well, how old were you two in 1931 when you moved back to Readyville?

PC: I was about three years old because I was born in 1928.

NH: I was old enough to start to school, so I was three years older. I mean, I was nearly seven. I think we came back in the summer. I started school that fall is the reason we came back.

PC: See, Daddy was born in Jasper, Alabama and went to work with his father is how come he was on bridge work. He said that his first view of Cannon County was from the seat of a wagon behind a team of mules, which he had driven from Fayetteville, Tennessee in one day. That was the first time he came. See, mother already lived there in Readyville. So that's how they got together. That's how come [unclear] there though. Then when they married, she went with him on bridge work. That's how come them out of Cannon County. Then when we got old enough that Normagine started school, they moved back to Cannon County so we wouldn't have to be going from one school to another when he moved jobs. Because he always wasn't at one place too long because of finishing out the job, going to another town, you see? So that's the reason we were there, we were gone, and back. Where they were.

LB: Um-hmm. All right.

NH: Mother worked at the post office after she got out of high school. That was the reason they met because she was working at the post office and he was working on the road. He would go to the post office to see her.

PC: Well, he'd go there to mail letters to his girlfriend back home. (all laugh)
That's how he met her.

LB: So how long did it take them to start dating then after they first initially met in Readyville?

PC: Let's see, I have the date when they married.

NH: They married in [19]24 I think.

PC: [unclear] Oh okay. On May the 3rd, 1924, George and Margaret were married sitting in the car they had just bought. They were in front of the New Hope Church of Christ. Mr. Dave Holmes married them.

LB: Okay. So was Dave Holmes a pastor in Readyville?

PC: No. He was a commissioner. They had something to do with the politics I guess of the county or something. I don't know.

NH: Probably something like a Justice of the Peace or something.

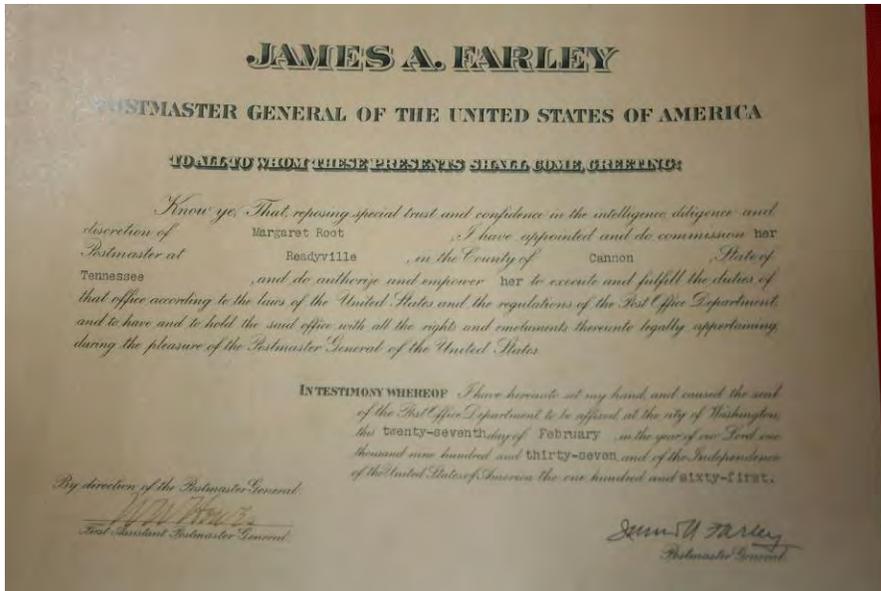
PC: But he's the one that married them.

LB: Your mother – you said your mother worked at the post office, right? When did she become the postmaster or postmistress of Readyville?

PC: 1937 I think.

NH: See, we came back in [19]31, and she worked in the post office when we came back because Mr. Hollandsworth wanted her to come back and work under him. Then he retired, and it was Henry Holmes that was postmaster as what –

PC: Interim. In-between Mr. Hollandsworth and Mother. Henry Holmes acted as postmaster during that period of time. Then she was appointed I believe that says [copy of certificate that Polly brought with her to the interview] in 1937. And stayed there postmaster until she retired in 1960.



LB: Oh. Wow. So did she enjoy doing that I guess? (laughs)

PC: I guess so.

LB: So what was your mother like?

NH: She was very quiet to be out in public like she was. Very soft until you crossed her. (laughs) She could say no real fast. If she got after us — of course Dad traveled, so if he was home on the weekend, and she got after us about something, he'd say, "Oh, I did it." (laughs) That made everybody laugh, and so, it was okay.

He went from bridge work then to TVA [Tennessee Valley Authority] in 1935 I believe, didn't he?

PC: Retired in 1967 from TVA as an engineer. Was carrying an engineer's card at that time, and I'm sure he didn't even finish high school.

NH: I thought he finished fifth grade, but I may be wrong.

PC: I don't know, but you couldn't do that today.

LB: No. That's great though. So was your father more outspoken than your mother then? Was he less quiet or anything?

NH: They were both very easygoing I thought. I mean, we never really had any problems.

LB: Yeah.

PC: They were ideal parents. Let's put it that way.

NH: That's what some of our friends thought. Our friends came and visited us a lot in the store because it was different, and we could have one ice cream cone everyday. No more, but you'd be amazed at how much ice cream you could pile up on one cone. (all laugh) I remember that very well.

LB: So do you remember any of the owners of the mill? Did you ever talk to any of them or anything like that?

PC: Mr. Justice is the only one I ever knew.

NH: Yeah. See, he was the one that was there the time that we were there. Like I said earlier, she's always lived within four miles of the mill, but I was gone for thirty years with different reasons. So really, Mr. Justice is the only one I ever had any contact with. I don't think you did either, did you?

PC: Now he had his youngest son in his high school just a year ahead of me. Of course, the Justices lived around there in Old Readyville. So we always knew them.

LB: Um-hmm. So what was he like? What was Mr. Justice like?

PC: I really don't know. He come to the post office every afternoon to get his paper. They had a *Tennessean* [statewide newspaper] come every morning a *Banner* that came in the afternoon. When he come to get his paper, he'd let Normagine and I read the funny paper. Kids always liked the funny paper back then. He'd let us read his funny paper when he come to get the mail. He was well thought of as far as I know. His wife Mrs. Justice went to church up there at New Hope where we went.

NH: See, the river in Readyville divided the county and also the school. So the ones in Old Readyville went to Kittrell [Kittrell Elementary School] and on our side went to Woodbury. So it was unusual to be in school with the same ones, you know, there across the river. Once in a while one of them would go to Woodbury that could – I guess Mr. Justice being across the river is the way Paul went to Woodbury.

LB: So (all laugh). That's okay. So earlier you were showing me some pictures of the dam. Did you two and your friends hang out around the dam and swim or anything like that? Yeah.



PC: Everyday if we could in the summertime. It was a great place for swimming. People would have picnics down there.

NH: People from Woodbury came down there to swim.

PC: Folks from all around here.

NH: All around. Yeah. Because there's no swimming pools anywhere.

PC: I took a computer literacy class down here at MTSU [Middle Tennessee State University] – I don't know – may have been four or five years ago. The teacher, when he found out I was from that direction, he asked about the lady that had taught at Woodbury and said he used to go there to swim. I can't remember the teacher's name right now. (all laugh) He was saying that he went there to swim in the summertime. He lived up there close enough that he went – there was always a crowd around there on the weekends.

LB: So do you have any particular stories about any time that you were ever at the dam or was it just – was there anything that happened any one day or anything like that sticks out in your memory or was fun and going swimming?

NH: We had fun.

LB: Yeah. (all laugh) At the actual mill – I know in the [19]70s like a lot of hippies lived around there and hung out there, but before then in earlier times did people just hang out around the mill at all? The actual mill, not just the dam?

PC: Not that I know of except during wheat cutting time and times when people be hauling their grain there. Other than that, I can't remember any.

NH: Well, young girls wouldn't have been in there anyway. I can remember going down there and watching them cut the ice into chunks. I believe it was Mr. Stroop that was talking about chopping the ice or cutting it in – I believe he said it came out in three hundred pound blocks.

LB: Yes. Um-hmm.

NH: That sounds like about what I saw. I saw them saw cutting the ice into blocks that they could handle. We lived in the house there at one time where you turn off to go to the mill. Some of those pictures [pictures Normagine and Polly brought to the interview] are from there. So we saw people coming and going, but being young kids, we didn't pay any attention when we were ten, eleven years old. (laughs)

LB: Yeah. (laughs)

PC: Yes. We had a ice box we used some of the ice in when we lived there.

LB: So how long would a three hundred pound block of ice last? You don't know? Okay. (laughs)

PC: I guess it'd depend on how big your refrigerator was and how much ice you could put in there. I don't know. Our grandparents that lived up the road there, they had a larger refrigerator, and I'm sure they put in a hundred pounds at a time. So it would had to have lasted a few days.

NH: She lives in the house now where our grandparents bought in 1925.

LB: Oh.

NH: No. Yeah, that's when you said it was, wasn't it?

PC: Yes.

NH: She lives in that house now.

LB: Are those your mother's parents?

PC: Yes.

LB: Yes. Okay. Um-hmm.

PC: It's not in Readyville. It's three or four miles up the road.

LB: What were your grandparents' names?

PC: Albert and Sally Perry. Our grandmother was a Brandon. That's how come we're distantly related to the Brandon man that came down with Charles Ready and started the mill was through our grandmother.

NH: They were farming for Mr. S.F. Houston that owned the Sinclair Oil Company in Murfreesboro [Tennessee]. There at the edge of Readyville before they bought the house – the one where she's living now.

PC: He also farmed some land of Mrs. McKnight that lived in the Brandon house – the old house there in Old Readyville. [shows Lauren photographs]

LB: Oh, this one. Okay.

PC: Right there. That one. The lady that lived there at that time – they farmed some of her land.

NH: Polly has a piece of furniture that came from – wasn't that where that piece of furniture came from?

PC: Uh-huh. And the swing on the front porch. (all laugh)

LB: So do you two know Bobbie Hayes in Readyville?

PC: That lives up there now?

LB: Um-hmm. Yeah.

PC: Yes. Uh-huh.

LB: Did you all ever live in a house that she had lived in or her family had lived in at one time because I thought I saw that somewhere?

NH: I don't know. Who is—

PC: Bobbie Hayes up the creek.

NH: I thought she said a "she."

LB: Yeah. Yeah, she's a woman. (all laugh) Yeah. Yeah.

PC: We're not talking about the same—

NH: Uh-uh.

LB: Oh.

PC: Oh, I'm sorry. (all laugh)

LB: I'm sorry.

NH: There's a man up the creek from us, Bobbie Hayes.

LB: Oh. Oh, okay.

NH: Where does she come in? I mean, the Bobbie Hayes that you're talking about?

LB: Well, in my information on her, it says that she lived behind the mill for a while. I'm not sure how long.

NH: That would have been in that cabin that he moved.

PC: I don't know. You know, you walk around Tally Hill there where a lot of people live, so I don't know.

NH: Um-mm. I don't remember that.

PC: Where they're talking about that is.

LB: Okay.

PC: Hayes – there was a Hayes, you know, that run it for a while I think back before us. I don't know whether some of that came here. I just don't know.

LB: All right. Well, you were showing me an article a little bit earlier about Rat McFerrin who produced electricity for the town and everything. Was there ever a time when you lived in Readyville when you all didn't have electricity?

PC: No.

LB: Okay.

PC: We always had it. (laughs) That was just up the road, next house up the road didn't have it. So we didn't think anything about it at the time. We just had electricity.

LB: Um-hmm. So, did you ever know anyone who actually got their electricity from the mill in the earlier times?

PC: Well, all of us right there.

NH: Yeah. Where we lived. The two houses that we lived in when we came back was still, I imagine, connected someway.

PC: So I don't know how many they furnished through the Readyville Mill. I don't know. We didn't really think that much about it at that time. We just knew we had electricity, and if you went visiting, they didn't have it. (Lauren laughs)

NH: A lot of our friends didn't have it that lived out in the country. We remember Mr. McFerrin and his children or his, you know, that family there. Now, I never knew Mrs. McFerrin, but –

PC: I don't know whether she was still living at that time.

NH: I don't ever remember her, but I can remember Mr. McFerrin very well because see, the store was next door to their house where they lived. It eventually burned, but –

PC: Oh, that's the time when it burned because the store building and the post office was in the yard where the house burned. They was afraid the store building – that's the old store building in that picture there. They were afraid that it was going to burn. The post office was in the back of it. And – so Mother took the post office books, went across the road, and sat in a car until the house burned to be sure that she had the books out of the post office in case the post office burned. We were living in the house right in front of the mill when it burned. The men took buckets out of the store and formed a line and carried water from the race and throwed on the back of the store building to keep it from burning. They said the store building got so hot that when they throw water on the building, steam would rise from it, but it didn't burn. At that time, Daddy had already started our house that we moved into down there that we stayed in so long. They already had a pump in the well, and so he got – it wasn't completed enough that we were in it – but he took a hose pipe, got on the roof of it, and every time something – a piece of burning material would land on it from the burning house, he'd put it out with that hosepipe that he had.

When they started building the house, there was a man came to the post office and said to Mother, said, "Margaret, are you sure that's where George wants that well dug?" Because he noticed they were digging it in the spot where the house was going to be. She politely told him, "Yes. That's exactly where George wants that well dug." Because it was under the house. He had it in mind if he ever had trouble and had to pull the pipe, it would go up through the hallway and up to work on the pump if he needed to. So that's how come he already had water over there.

LB: Oh yeah, are you two the only children of your parents, or do you have other brothers and sisters? Okay. All right.

So, have you two always lived close to each other, or was there – oh yeah, you said you lived away for thirty years, right?

PC: (she and Normagine laugh) She married and left.

LB: Oh. When did you get married?

NH: (coughs) I got married in 1944 when I graduated from high school during World War II. So we lived through all of that – the maneuvers here, and of course we were right there on the main road at the post office when all the maneuvers went through here.

LB: Oh wow. What was that like?

NH: (laughs) That is a whole story in itself. (coughs) I married while I went to Illinois and married a soldier. Then while he was overseas, then I worked at Smyrna Air Base. Then we ended up living in Murfreesboro, Nashville, and Kansas City [Kansas].

PC: He was raised in Cannon County though.

NH: Yeah. Yeah.

LB: Um-hmm. What was his name?

NH: Grady Haley. He—

LB: So he served in World War II then?

NH: Um-hmm. He was in the Air Force and served in Brazil. Recife, Brazil. Then ended up retiring from Yellow Freight System and dying at fifty-two.

LB: Oh, I'm sorry.

NH: That's just life.

LB: Yeah.

NH: Like I said, she'd been here— that's the reason she has collected so much of this stuff and—

LB: Yes. Now Normagine was telling me that you only lived away while you were at college, right? That was the only time you lived away?

PC: Yeah.

LB: You went to UT Knoxville [University of Tennessee at Knoxville]?

PC: Uh-huh.

LB: So what did you get your degree in?

PC: What?

LB: What did you get your degree in? What did you major in?

PC: Oh. Agriculture.

LB: Oh okay. All right.

PC: Came back home to farm. (laughs)

LB: Oh okay. How did that go?

PC: It went well.

NH: Well, you could tell her about the cattle.

PC: Well, we started out with chickens.

NH: Well, yeah. (Lauren laughs)

PC: There's still a little barn that Daddy built behind the Tilford's Lumber building that he keeps his lumber in. Beside of the brick house there that we lived in. The barn is still there behind that building because I went a couple of years ago to see it back there. Daddy built it for – Mother had a cow that she milked for us to have milk and butter. Normagine and I didn't milk it. (Polly and Lauren laugh) Only Mother did.

NH: No. She got up and milked her every morning and then went and opened the post office, which is all in walking distance there from the mill.

PC: Daddy thought kids ought to have something to keep them busy, so we got started in the chicken business. (Lauren laughs) We raised chickens, and there's still some of those chicken houses there. People around there, if they wanted fryers, we'd sell them that way. We had eggs. From that, we bought a cow. We sold our chickens and bought a cow from our grandfather. From that, Daddy got into the polled Hereford [type of cattle] business. So we had some cows around. It wasn't many acres. I think there was only about four acres there, but we had two or three cows. From that then he really got into the cattle business. I guess that's how come we left Readyville and moved up on Hollis's Creek where my grandfather – close to where he lived.

LB: Is that considered Woodbury [Tennessee] then?

PC: Up on Hollis's Creek?

LB: Uh-huh.

PC: It's between Readyville and Woodbury.

LB: Okay.

NH: About the same distance. I measured it.

LB: Okay. (laughs)

NH: We're on Woodbury route.

LB: Oh okay.

NH: Daddy bought the first – and brought into Readyville there across from the mill, one of the first polled Hereford cattle in Tennessee. His picture was in Kansas City in the polled Hereford headquarters out there because I went to see it. So, that all started at Readyville.

LB: So what is the significance of that kind of cattle?

PC: Well, they were good for eating.

LB: Yeah. I'm not up to par on cattle. So I wasn't sure, so, yeah. (laughs)

PC: Polled Hereford is not as popular today as they were back then. They've got so many other breeds – beef breeds and all that – they're not as popular today as they were then. They were very popular at that time.

LB: Okay. So did you ever get married Polly?

PC: Yes. Married Hoyt Campbell, a farmer. We lived there in Cannon County within – always lived in sight of where I live now.

LB: Um-hmm. So do you have children?

PC: I have three.

LB: Um-hmm. Do they all still live in that area, or have they moved away?

PC: They all live close.

LB: Um-hmm. So, Normagine, do you have children?

NH: I have four sons, and they all live all over. (Lauren laughs) Florida, Michigan, Kansas City [Kansas], and Lewisburg, Tennessee.

LB: Well, one stayed sort of close. So, yeah.

NH: And four great-grandchildren.

LB: Oh wow.

NH: She has – what –

PC: Don't ask me to count them.

NH: (laughs) She has seven or eight great-grandchildren within distance to come and eat lunch with her.

LB: Oh. Well that's great. Yeah. (laughs) Oh yeah, but you all were telling me a little bit earlier that people would have picnics down around the dam as well. Did you all ever do that? Did you go and have picnics there?

NH: Oh we had people that would come and spend the weekend with us, and we'd go down and swim before breakfast. We usually came back to the house and eat, but lots of people did, yes. There was some beautiful rocks, big boulders down there that you could sit on in the sun. Tomm [Tomm Brady, the current mill owner] now has made it where he's keeping it mowed, keeping it cleaned up and all on that side. Where he's using as a parking, that's where we used to play baseball, wasn't it? Or softball?

PC: Close to –

NH: Part of that field.

PC: Between – yeah. Between [unclear].

NH: On that corner.

PC: Seemed to me like even the men played baseball right there some.

NH: Well, during World War II, the women had teams and played softball down there. See, you didn't need bleachers. You could just sit on that bank going up to the road. So it worked out real well, but now it's grown up. Part of it's grown up.

PC: Well Tomm has cleaned off the part that he owns there, but where we played ball actually is grown up. We were excited when we first saw Tomm and met him down there too.

LB: So are you glad to see the mill restored?

PC: Oh yes.

LB: Yeah. Um-hmm.

PC: I don't know how come I was driving through, but we were going through Readyville, and we noticed. I believe he drove a white truck then. White pickup parked down at the mill. We decided something was going on, so we just stopped to see what. It was Tomm up on a ladder replacing a piece of weatherboarding on the outside. That was the first time that we met him. Since then, every time we think he's doing something down there, we stop to see what it is. (Lauren laughs) Took him all the information we had on Readyville and that type of thing. Well let's see, I was there when he was sealing the inside of the building with this yellow poplar. He's told you about it I'm sure. When he was placing the beams under the mill to keep it from falling down, when he was up on the ends of the mill painting, when they were making rocks to go behind the mill so as to make that a nice place, we just kept up with him to see what he was doing and what was going on down there.

LB: So how different or alike does the mill look now than it did when you were younger, when you remember it, when it was still working and people still came there for their flour and everything?

PC: I think it looks just like it did, don't you?

NH: Well, it's a little fresher looking. (all laugh) All the paint he's put on.

PC: He did have to tear away the little building on the end that was the office, that Mr. Justice used as an office.

NH: There between—

PC: Right on the end of the main mill.

NH: Grinding—yeah. The mill part.

PC: Of course where Mr. Justice parked his truck, that building is not there anymore.

NH: It was an old rock –

PC: [It was an old building backed up to the] race –

NH: See there was a swinging bridge that went across the water of the race. We called it the race. I don't know what they call it now.

PC: I don't know.

NH: Went from this open end of the mill, across to that house where we lived. So one of the boys would come up. Why he came over there to get drinking water, I don't know. They had a well. They were making ice.

PC: I don't know.

NH: He came over there and got drinking water out of the pump on the back porch of that house that's still standing there next to the mill. Of course, we saw it when it was fairly good. Then we saw it go down over the years, and now it just looks so good that.

Well, I had the old ceiling fan that was in the old store building. Mother and Daddy had put it up in the other building, and then when they went to the farm, they put it in the house where I'm living now. When I remodeled that house, I took that fan down. It came from that old store building in the [19]20s and took it to Tomm. I don't know whether he'll ever put it up or not, but I gave it to him. It was laying down there in the mill the last time I saw it. But I asked him if he want it, and he said, "Oh yes!" So I thought that was good for it to stay in Readyville.

PC: See, Mr. Hollandsworth, when he was in the store building, owned all of the equipment and everything in the store. Then when Mother and Daddy bought it from Mr. Hollandsworth, it all became theirs. So they had even what was in the post office. And I'm sure today probably the government owns your files and safe and things in the post office, but at that time, it was owned by the individual. So Mother and Daddy got all the equipment – files, cabinets, things like that – the safe. All that that was in the store and the post office when they bought it. So that's how come the ceiling fan and the scales that they weighed feed on, the safe.

NH: Roll top desk. Roll top desk out of the post office.

PC: Yeah. The safe still has "W.G. Hollandsworth" on the front of it.

NH: I don't know.

PC: I bet you.

NH: I opened it this morning, but I don't know what's on it. (all laugh) It's at my house.

LB: Oh.

PC: So that's the reason we ended up with that type of things.

NH: Now it's been fun to see people coming to the mill. There is a large crowd down there on Saturday to eat breakfast.

LB: Yes. Um-hmm. Have you ever gone there for breakfast?

NH: Oh yeah.

PC: Yes.

NH: We've been several times. Fact is, they began to think we needed to be there every Saturday I think. My two older sons can remember going to the mill with their grandfather, and so I've had all them down there for breakfast when they come in on vacation. She's had all of her kids down there.

LB: Um-hmm. So what would your father take your sons to the mill for? Would they help him with—?

NH: Well, they liked to see all the machinery when they were little boys. They remembered it. The one that came in from Kansas City, they went all the way to the top of the mill. I didn't go up there with them, but they did. Because there's a stairwell now all the way to the top. What would it be? Four floors—up four floors?

LB: Yeah. Um-hmm. (laughs)

NH: Yeah. They enjoyed going with their grandfather to the mill. It was just fun. It wasn't work.

LB: Yeah, yeah.

PC: We'd like to see them get the dam fixed and it all like it used to be, really. I don't know when they ever will or not, but it'd be nice. I think the kids would enjoy it too as much as anything. They might not let them swim in it though like we used to.

LB: So, one of these pictures you showed me is of the mill when there was a flood. Was there any particular floods where it got really bad there, or did it just usually flood like that?



PC: No. This was a little bit unusual. Now there was a mark on the mill—I don't know where, and Tomm said he left it. I don't know. There was a mark on the mill where they marked when the water was up. They said when—this picture you were talking about—said that was the highest it had been since 1910 by a mark on the mill. So I don't know. When we were living in that house, it didn't get—this house [points to photograph]. This was after we moved out of the house in front of the mill.

NH: That's the house in front of the mill right there on the right.

PC: Yeah. That's it right there. We lived in that house. When we lived in that house, the water got up. Got up enough that it run across the front yard from—at that house. Mother wouldn't stay there anymore. That was the end of that. That's when we moved. (all laugh)

NH: She got out and got another house to live in that next day I think.

LB: Yeah. (laughs)

PC: We moved up the road – just in sight up the road where my aunt and uncle lived. We moved up there with them while they were building the house.

NH: Well, I can't – yeah.

PC: [unclear] [shuffles through photos on table]

NH: This one. That's the one we went to. [points to photograph of house]

PC: We lived with them, stored the furniture, and we stayed in one room. That was the winter it snowed so. Daddy told Normagine and I, says, "Well, if you get out and run around the house barefooted, your feet won't be cold the rest of the winter." Of course we tried it. (all laugh)

NH: Oh, the funny part was she half way around, she says, "Oh. I'm going back." Well, I think she went further than I did because I went all the way around. She turned around and went back. (all laugh)

LB: What year is this photograph of the flood from?

PC: I don't know.

NH: I don't have that.

PC: I don't know. That's all I had on it was just pictures of it.

NH: Was that when Mrs. Hollandsworth lived there? When she was living there?

PC: It was after we were back and after we had moved out. So it had to be after 193 –

NH: 6.

PC: 6. Or somewhere in that time.

NH: It went in the house when Mrs. Hollandsworth was living there.

PC: Uh-huh. They carried her out across the foot bridge.

NH: Because it was easier I guess to get her out that way.

PC: They couldn't go in the front I don't guess.

NH: It'd been too deep. Now that was on up — she was in years. An older person when that happened.

PC: Yeah. She lived there after we did. Just the last few years they've done some work on this house and raised it some so they thought the water wouldn't get in it again. I guess I knew at the time how much they raised it, but I don't know how much they raised it. I don't know who owns it or anything now. That building right there [referring to photograph] is the one that's not there anymore.

LB: Oh okay.

PC: It was in front of the long building there. It's not there anymore.

NH: That's the one that was backed up to the race. Mr. Justice parked his pickup in that one.

PC: Yeah.

NH: Over the years, we've agreed since they've started working on the mill and all, we've agreed real well on our memories. We'll say, "Do you remember so-and-so?" We've come near agreeing on it.

PC: Oh. We haven't told her about them breaking in the store building and post office down there. I don't know what year that was.

NH: It was before 1935 because Grandfather died in 1935. So it had to be [19]32, [19]33.

PC: If they got anything out of the post office, I don't remember it.

NH: It was cigarettes and my grandfather's hat that he left over there. (all laugh)

LB: That's all the —

NH: That's all I remember.

LB: That's all the robbers stole? Wow.

NH: That's all I remember. (laughs) You know, kids — they just remember part of it.

LB: Yeah. Um-hmm. I guess that was really uncommon I guess, right? For people to just break in and steal things?

NH: It wasn't as prevalent then as it is now.

LB: Yeah. Um-hmm. Well, at least it wasn't anything too bad, I guess. (laughs)

NH: No. My grandfather was just irate about his hat.

PC: That's how come they knew for sure when they caught the ones that did it. Was because he could identify his hat. (all laugh)

LB: So they were caught?

PC: Yes.

LB: How many was it?

PC: I don't remember.

NH: I don't either.

PC: I just remember that he identified his hat, and that's why he knew for sure that they were the ones.

LB: Yeah.

NH: Mother identified her writings where she had added up a bill on the back of the carton of cigarettes.

LB: Oh. Oh okay.

NH: She had very distinct writing working in the post office like she had.

No, it was interesting growing up there where the mill and just being out in the public. It was completely different then to what – if you wanted to go to town, you went out and flagged the bus down to go to town – that went from Knoxville to Nashville.

LB: Wow.

PC: Yeah. I got on the bus right in front of the house when I got ready to go back to Knoxville and got off right in front of the house when I come home.

LB: Wow. (laughs)

PC: The way they got their mail out there was a mail carrier from Murfreesboro drove a car and brought it up at seven o'clock in the morning. Three o'clock in the afternoon, it went on to Woodbury and picked up mail at Woodbury and Readyville and brought it back to Murfreesboro. So that's the way they got their mail out there. Mrs. Overall is the first one I can remember driving the mail car. Then there was Mr. Elliott and Mr. Cates was the first ones I can remember on the two routes out of Readyville. One went up towards Woodbury toward Porterfield and Locke Creek, and the other one came down toward Kittrell.

NH: See, after the mail run in the mornings, then everybody in Readyville walked in and got their mail. Mr. Justice would come up every morning and get the mail and—

PC: Back in the afternoon for his paper.

NH: For his paper. (laughs)

LB: So did you spend a lot of time with your mother in the post office?

PC: Oh, we weren't allowed in the post office part, but yeah, we could the front part of it of course out there. No, she didn't allow us in the working part of the post office, but she was always handy if we needed her. We always lived right there at it.

NH: We'd get up on the fence and holler for her. (all laugh)

PC: Cut a hole in my head.

NH: Yeah. She fell off the fence one day.

LB: Oh. I bet that was painful. (all laugh)

NH: It's been so much fun though to see the mill and get acquainted with Tomm and just watch the progress.

PC: He's such a nice person.

LB: Yes.

PC: We've enjoyed him.

NH: Yeah. When I stopped at the store the other day, he came out a little gate and was yelling at me as I went in the store. (laughs) I didn't stop and talk to him. We were both busy.

PC: We didn't tell her about the man that backed up to the race one night and thought he was in a hotel in Murfreesboro. (Normagine laughs) That's when we lived down there in the house in front of the mill. Must have been on a weekend because Daddy was there. Papa Root, our grandfather, was there. He lived with us for a while. They were both home, so it must have been on the weekend. They got woke up in the middle of the night with this pounding on the door. It turned out to be a drunk man. They helped him get back to his car, and they decided though that if they left him there, he'd freeze to death. I don't know how cold it was, but it must have been pretty cold. He had backed his car right up to the edge of the race in front of that house – in front of this house right here [points to photograph]. He backed his car right up to the edge of the race. They said if he'd gone any farther, he'd have ended up in the race. They decided that he shouldn't stay there in the car – he'd freeze to death. The store building was just across the road there – not the brick building, the old building. They went over to the store building, built up a good fire. They had a big rocking chair over there at the store building, so they took him over there and sat him in that rocking chair and left him until morning to keep him from freezing. So the next morning when he – I don't guess he knew where he was when he woke up. I don't remember. When they talked to him to find out what was going on, he thought he was at a hotel in Murfreesboro. That's where he thought he stopped at.

LB: (laughs) Wow.

PC: So they took care of him until morning until they could get him woke up to know where he was and everything.

LB: When was that? Do you remember what year that was?

PC: It was while we were living right there. So it had to be from between 1931 and 1936. It had to be right in there somewhere.

NH: I'd say it was 1934.

PC: Probably because –

NH: Because I was like ten years old when we were living there.

PC: Well we first lived in the other house first, and I don't know for how long.

NH: Why did we move? Was it Mr. Hollandsworth's house burned, and they wanted that house? Then the other house was available, and he moved us over there.

PC: Must have been, but I don't remember his house burning. I know it did.

NH: Yeah. It was a nice house because I remember playing up there later, and it had little bitty tile where the bathroom had had tile on it. So it had to be a good house back then.

PC: Yeah. He owned both of those houses. The one in front of the mill and the one we first moved back into. He owned both of them at that time. Now, I don't know how come or anything.

NH: Let's see. He married a Hayes, didn't he?

PC: Yeah. I guess he did.

NH: Was the reason that he was in Readyville because the Hayeses were one of the—I don't know how long they run the mill or—

PC: They were connected with the mill somehow.

LB: Um-hmm. Okay. (laughs)

NH: She'll agree. (laughs)

LB: I don't know too much about the Hayeses, so—

NH: I just know they were involved with Readyville. I mean, because we always called that house the Hayes house.

PC: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

LB: Yeah.

PC: I think there was a Hayes back in therebefore Normagine and I were there. I think they run the mill at one time and lived in that house right in front of the mill. I think you'll find that in some of this history on Readyville somewhere.

LB: Yeah.

PC: Mrs. Hollandsworth ended up living there after we moved out for a good while.

NH: Until it flooded and ruined everything she had.

PC: Until she left Readyville I guess and went to Woodbury.

NH: What else? We got sidetracked.

LB: Oh no, that's fine. So do you remember anyone making moonshine from what they would come get from the mill?

NH: No. Of course, being a young kid like we were, I wouldn't remember. We didn't remember anything like that.

PC: Don't even remember talk of it or anything.

NH: Uh-uh.

PC: Could have been. Who knows?

NH: Yeah. (all laugh) Cannon County was well known for it, even though we were right on the Rutherford County line.

LB: Yeah. Okay.

NH: Since they've started the—

PC: Moonshine in Cannon County.

NH: Yeah.

PC: Factory for it or whatever.

NH: Trying to say—anyway.

LB: So you were telling me a little bit earlier that you're family was friends with some of the Readys—that your mom knew Mayme Ready. What were the Readys—I guess descended from the original Charles Ready—what were they like? Did they still do things with the mill, or were they just not involved with it anymore?

NH: I don't think they were involved with the mill at that time when we knew them because Mayme worked at a store in Murfreesboro, and Brightie was a schoolteacher. And Bill—

PC: Farmed.

NH: Farmed.

PC: Elam was already gone when we knew them.

NH: He ended up being a truck driver, didn't he?

PC: Oh, I believe he was.

NH: Uh-huh. So they were never involved—

PC: Mrs. Mitchell—Ina was married [unclear].

NH: Yeah. They were farmers.

PC: Yeah. How come we knew them so well was because they lived just—well, I guess inside of Readyville. They lived right up there. The Ready children there that we were talking about grew up with my mother and her family because they lived just kind of across the road from each other up there. So we always knew them. But as far as them having anything to do with the mill business-wise or anything, not that I know of. No. They were just—like I say, family. They knew each other, and their children were together a lot. They lived close. I don't know that they were related to the Ready that started the mill. I just guess I always thought they were. I don't know.

NH: I have no idea.

LB: So did your mother hang out with Mayme Ready a lot then? You were showing me the picture of them two together.



PC: I think they did, especially when they were young because we have old pictures of them with others together and everything. So I think they probably did. They were about the same age. Mother and Mayme were.

NH: That picture was where they'd been to – they were in Nashville shopping. I think that's –

PC: Uh-huh. Back then they'd just snap your picture on the street, and that's what that was.

NH: I've got some of me down there too.

LB: So would you all take trips often when you were young to Nashville and other cities, or did you mostly stay around Readyville?

NH: I think we traveled more than our friends or people our age because of our father following construction and then following TVA because they were building the big towers for TVA in Tennessee at that time. We got on the bus one time I know at home and went to Memphis and met our father for the weekend. So it wasn't like going out of state or anything. We went to Memphis, we went to –

PC: Went to one of the dams.

NH: We went to one in East Tennessee and one down there in West Tennessee I remember.

PC: Where he was running electricity to the dam they were building.

NH: We'd get to go have lunch where all the workers – they'd have a dining room for the workers and all. We'd go eat lunch with them. I think we got to do a little more stuff like that then our friends at that time because I know some of them said they would not go to Nashville shopping. (laughs)

PC: Oh, well I don't know whether I would today or not. Get on the bus and go. (all laugh) Normagine and I would get on the bus and go to Nashville, and at that time the bus station was what? One block away from Church Street?

NH: Yeah. Fifth [Avenue] and Church wasn't it? Or Fifth and Commerce [Street] I guess.

PC: It was one block down. Then when you walked up that block, you were right up there in the shopping area. Harvey's, Cain-Sloan's, all the little –

NH: [unclear]

PC: All the little shops and all. Spend your day, do whatever you want to do. Then walk down the block and go catch a bus and go home. Busses don't run through like that today, so you can't do that. (all laugh) See if you got a car handy to get in to go.

LB: So what kind of businesses would you shop at in Readyville besides your father's general store? Yeah.

NH: (laughs) That and the mill was it. Get your car worked on.

PC: Yeah.

NH: That was it.

PC: There were two garages. I believe Mrs. Fannie Bell had some groceries.

NH: I can vaguely remember that.

PC: Yeah. Then they built the one where the post office is now while we were there. I think Mrs. Fannie Bell then closed her store pretty much. That still left two grocery stores. Tasseys' Garage there where Russell's Market is.

NH: And Holmes Garage, and the mill. That was it. [Polly would like to add that there was also a telephone office in Readyville at the time.]

PC: Uh-huh. See, the bank was already gone at that time. I could have brought you something with the bank with Readyville on it because I had papers that my grandfather had. I guess it probably closed in [19]32. I don't know.

NH: I have no idea.

PC: Because I don't remember a bank at all.

LB: So did the Great Depression affect Readyville a lot, or since it was more rural, was it not as bad there? Did it still pose problems?

PC: The only thing I can remember about it really is I remember it wasn't unusual if somebody was walking and would stop and want something to eat. I mean, walking on the road because that was a main highway there. It wasn't unusual for somebody to stop wanting something to eat. I don't know why that stuck in my mind, but—

LB: Do you remember anything particularly about that Normagine?

NH: No. Because I think we were more fortunate than most people.

PC: Mother and Daddy always had work. I remember him maybe being home a short time, which we always liked to have him home. (laughs) It wasn't often that he was off from work and was home. Then Mother always worked.

NH: So we were more fortunate than most of the kids at that age.

PC: Now I can remember them in the grocery store where people would talk to them and maybe get groceries during the year to get them by until they get harvest—their grains and all to sell. Pay them when they sold their farm commodities in the fall. Then they'd catch up on what they owed you. Then there's that. I guess that was probably kind of the Depression time.

LB: Was there ever any evidence of like big class divisions in Readyville? Were there some people that were really well off and some people that were very poor, or was it all generally around the same social class?

NH: I don't remember any of that. (laughs) We just all went our merry way.

LB: Um-hmm. Yeah. Um-hmm. So I know that you lived in Illinois during World War II, right?

NH: Well, I was up there a month or so. (laughs)

LB: Oh, oh. A month or so. Never mind then. So where exactly did you live while you were gone for thirty years?

NH: Okay. I went to Illinois, married my husband who was in service and could not get off. We were up there four or five months until he graduated from a school. Then he went to Texas, and they lost his papers. So I went out there for a couple of months. Then when he came back out of service, we lived with Mother and Daddy a while and with his parents a while, and then he went on the truck line. Well, he went on state trooper first. We went to Murfreesboro, and Lawrenceburg, and then he went to the truck lines and worked there until he had to take a disability retirement. So we went from Murfreesboro to Nashville to Kansas City and then back to where I am now when he had to take disability, but we always came home on vacations. Our parents were both always here. So we always counted this home.

LB: You lived in Readyville during World War II? So did that have any affect on the town? Did a lot of men go to war from the town?

PC: I think like we mentioned earlier, the young man [Marvin Harris] that managed the store for Mother and Daddy was called into service. That's when they closed – quit selling groceries. I think we realized more than people in other parts of even of the United States what it was because they had maneuvers right there. Right here in Middle Tennessee. There'd be hours that they'd be moving troops and things from one part of the Tennessee to another part around here. They'd be hours on the road because that was the main highway. That they would go by – tanks, trucks, whatever.

Where I live right now, they had a camp set up for – I don't know how long they stayed there. That was the first movie that my grandfather had ever seen was – the lot there by the house is sloping. The army men set up a screen and was going to show a movie to the soldiers that were there. They asked my grandfather to come out and watch with them. That was the first time he'd ever seen a movie when he did that. So I think it impressed on us that lived in Middle Tennessee more than maybe the rest of the country of just what it was like.

Oh, and the soldiers would want to mail mail. They'd throw letters out for us to pick up. Because they could tell they were passing a post office, and they'd throw the letters out for us to pick up and mail for them.

LB: Wow.

NH: See, they didn't have to have a stamp. They could just mark their letters and didn't have to have a stamp. They couldn't stop. See they'd go by for hours. All day, all night. They couldn't stop, and that was their only way of communicating with home. To us teenage girls that was fun. (laughs) All those young men going by.

LB: (laughs) Yes.

NH: Us being on the main highway, I guess it affected us more than —

LB: So besides watching the soldiers go by, what else would you do for fun when you were a teenager in Readyville? (Normagine and Lauren laugh)

NH: There wasn't much to do.

PC: Well they had movies.

NH: Oh yeah. We could go to Woodbury.

PC: They had a theater in Woodbury. So we'd go to a movie, go swimming, go to ball games. Then you had your basketball.

NH: Football.

PC: High school and all was just as important to you back then as now. So you had your ballgames to go to. The Fourth of July picnic at the Readyville School. I mean, it was something. Everybody went. So there'd be a crowd there. They'd play ball. I don't know what all they had at the picnic, but they had concession stands. They had the "Prettiest Baby" and all that sort of stuff going on. There was always a crowd there. Everybody always went to the Readyville Fourth of July picnic. I don't know how many years it went on.

NH: I think it ended, what? In World War II?

PC: I don't know.

NH: Or before that? I have no idea.

PC: I do remember going to the mill one time and going all the way to the top. Mr. Justice was glad to show you. I remember going in there and going all the way to the top of the mill.

LB: Wow. Are you afraid of heights?

PC: Well not inside like that. (all laugh) Outside, yes. I wouldn't have been up on the ladder painting like I found Tomm.

LB: Yeah. (laughs) Yeah. So did you get to see all of the machinery and things like that inside of the mill?

PC: Um-hmm.

LB: How it was working and that sort of thing?

PC: Yeah. Watch them catch the flour down there that you wanted to take home with you.

LB: So what did you think of the mill then? Were you a teenager then when you went through?

PC: Probably not. I was close. Somewhere along there. I don't remember. I just remember going through. There's somewhere along the way where he'd always get handful of flour and say, "See what you can smell of this." And throw it in your face. (all laugh)

LB: Oh my gosh.

PC: I don't remember where he did that at. You didn't think anything about the mill. It was just there. It was important to everybody, I'm sure, but you really didn't think too much about it because you always lived there in sight of it.

LB: So what kind of things would you and your mother or whoever else in your family – what kind of things would you make with the flour and corn meal that you would get from there?

PC: What would we –

LB: Yeah. What kind of food would you make with it?

PC: Oh. She always made biscuits and cornbread. Rolls.

NH: Dumplings. It makes better cornbread than what you buy at the store.

PC: Yeah. We like it today better.

NH: Well, even when I was in Kansas City, I had Mother and Daddy pick up meal and bring it to me when they were coming out there. They always brought meal to me.

LB: So would you bake a lot with your mother, or did she usually do it by herself?

NH: She always had somebody cooking for us.

LB: Oh. Oh, okay. Okay.

PC: Except on weekends.

NH: Yeah. She cooked on weekends.

LB: Okay.

NH: We always had a big breakfast on Sunday morning. I was doing some work in Nashville with the church and suggested we had fried chicken for a men's breakfast we were doing. They'd never thought about having fried chicken for breakfast. I said, "That's what we had on weekends was fried chicken." And gravy and hot biscuits and scrambled eggs. That man, he says, "Well I never thought about using fried chicken for breakfast." (laughs)

LB: So who would cook for you throughout the week? Did you have like a domestic servant?

NH: Well, it was different people over the years.

LB: Oh, okay.

NH: Yeah. She always had somebody at the house with us.

LB: Okay.

NH: Up until World War II. Then everything kind of went to pot. I mean, everybody had other things they had to do, and you had to do for yourself. She always had either a member of the family or somebody there at the house.

LB: Was it usually a woman that was there with you? [Normagine and Polly nod] Okay. Would she also babysit in addition to cooking and cleaning or anything else like that?

NH: Yeah, but we were too old for babysitting.

LB: Oh all right. Okay. (all laugh)

NH: Of course, she was always just across the street or next door. So, but yeah. It was doing the household –

LB: Yeah. Chores and things like that while she was gone.

NH: Um-hmm.

LB: So did you always get along with the people who would come?

NH: As far as I know. I don't remember ever having any problems at all.

LB: Were the women who would work for you, were they usually African American?

PC: Mostly at that time that did the household work – I remember Letha and some of them – Brown. I can't remember her last name. All that were younger –

NH: And one of the aunts came, stayed.

PC: Yeah. We had a couple of African Americans I remember that we just thought the world of.

NH: Oh yeah.

PC: If you wanted to know where something was, that's who you asked.

LB: Yeah.

PC: They lived close.

LB: Oh okay.

NH: Yeah. They were all close enough just to either stay with us or walk to work.

PC: Oh yeah.

NH: Everybody was just walking then.

LB: Do you remember their names? The ones who worked for you?

PC: Lallie Taylor is the one that I really remember.

NH: Yeah. That was—

PC: Lizzie Weatherly.

NH: They're the two that stayed later and stayed the most.

PC: Yeah. Of course, there's still a Taylor family that lives there. Jerry Wayne, this lady's grandson I believe he is. He finished high school with one of my children, so he still lives there.

LB: Oh okay. So were a lot of African Americans there? Or was their community really small?

NH: It was small. I don't know how many.

LB: When you were younger, when you went to school, were your schools segregated?

PC: At that time they were, yes.

LB: Do you remember when the schools—well, I know you were out of school by then, but do you remember when the schools were integrated—or desegregated?

PC: I don't remember what year, but I know they didn't have any problem up home with it. For years even the high school Black people up there were brought to Murfreesboro to go to high school. When they put them all together, there was no problem. If they've ever had a problem about that, I don't think so. They've always been well thought of in the communities up that way.

LB: Yeah.

NH: I think I was already in Kansas City when that happened.

PC: I can't remember what year because I know it wasn't while I was in school. It may have been while my children were in school probably. That they all went to high school together up there. I don't know whether they started high school and grammar school all together. At that same period of time and all—I just don't remember, but there was no problems about it.

LB: Yeah. Um-hmm. So did any African Americans work at the mill?

PC: I'm sure they did probably, but I don't know.

NH: I—

PC: We were not actually at the mill that much.

NH: We were just in hollering distance. (all laugh) We were just always around but not there.

LB: Yeah. Oh yeah. In addition to swimming and hanging around the dam and things like that, were there ever anything like dances or anything like that at the mill? Or any kind of gatherings? No?

NH: Not that I know of.

LB: The Fourth of July celebration—you said that was at the school in Readyville?

PC: Uh-huh. Up the road.

NH: Well, but Readyville School at that time is what? Three miles up toward Woodbury. Wasn't it?

PC: Yes. Now when Mother went to school—Readyville School—it was down there closer to Readyville. Then they built a new school up where Normagine and I went while mother was still in school because she said that while they were fixing the new school ready to move into and moving school and everything that her brother drove a wagon and carried their high school children. I don't know about the little children, but carried the high school children to Woodbury to school during that period of time. I don't know how long they had to go to Woodbury, but they rode in a wagon and went to Woodbury to school.

NH: Well now, the Readyville School that I knew though only went through the eighth grade.

PC: Yeah.

NH: I always remember them going to Woodbury to high school.

PC: The picture that Mother has—

NH: That was a big group.

PC: Uh-huh. It has the little children, and you have the high school children and all together. So they had a high school at Readyville at that time. Had one at Readyville for that part of the county, and one at Woodbury for the other part of the county. I'm sure Auburntown [Tennessee] probably has always had one over the hill there. I'm not sure. They did have one at Readyville and one at Woodbury.

LB: So did your mother graduate from high school?

PC: No.

LB: What year did she stop?

PC: I have no idea.

LB: Or what year in her education did she stop?

PC: I have no idea.

LB: Oh okay. You don't know?

PC: [unclear] Before she finished because she said they changed teachers, and she wasn't learning anything. So she quit.

LB: Oh okay. (laughs)

NH: Then we wonder why our kids sometimes — (laughs)

PC: I guess really, it didn't hurt her that much in what she did over the years. Today you better stay in school as long as you can.

LB: Yeah. (laughs) Well, both of you went further than your parents, right?

NH: I guess. Of course, she did. I only had a few hours of college.

LB: Oh okay. So why did you stop going to college?

NH: I got married.

LB: Oh okay. All right. (Normagine and Lauren laugh) Where did you go before you stopped going?

NH: I took a class or two in Kansas City and a class or two here. Just stuff I wanted to learn. I came down here after my husband died and took a class just to see if I could still learn, and the only thing available was economics. I took that, and I came out with a B. I thought, "Ha! I guess I can still learn!" So that was the end of my schooling.

PC: I'd hate to have to take a class now though. Too much is on computers.

NH: I'm trying to learn one.

LB: You said you took a course on computers here at MTSU though, didn't you? Were you telling me that earlier?

PC: Yeah. I took one here to learn more about computers and what you do on them and everything.

NH: I took one just to see what my kids were talking about because I had no idea when they'd all get together and talk. So I took one just to try to learn some language to see what it was.

LB: Yeah. So in Readyville, are there a lot of artists there? And people who do a lot of crafts that you know of?

PC: I'm sure there are.

NH: I have no idea what's there.

PC: I don't know.

NH: I know there's a one photographer over there in Old Readyville. I see his sign.

PC: He does the high school pictures for them and things.

NH: There used to be a woman—you have a lamp that she painted—that lived in the cabin there behind the mill.

PC: Oh, Miss Effie Carter?

NH: Um-hmm.

PC: Yeah. That was the cabin Tomm rolled down the hill.

NH: Yeah. The one that he has down there now. She did beautiful painting. You have a lamp, and I—what? A dog that she painted? Or did you paint the dog?
(laughs)

PC: The dog Miss Effie did and another picture. She did not do the lamp.

NH: Oh, I thought she did the lamp. I'm sorry.

PC: No. Rachel Parker did that lamp.

NH: Later. Okay. I knew Miss Effie did a lot.

PC: Uh-huh. That's the way she made her living.

NH: Was by painting.

PC: I'm sure there's people around there closer that do a lot of things. There was people that did something with furniture after you turn off to go to Readyville up there—there on the left. Then up there at Porterfield Road there used to be a place that made furniture. I don't know whether they still do or not.

LB: Have you ever heard anything about people who do basket weaving or anything like that?

PC: People that do what?

LB: Basket weaving.

PC: Oh. No.

NH: Not in Readyville. Now off in part of the county, yes. On my mail route, there is a lot. Also chairs and baskets and all. Now I don't know of any in Readyville.

LB: Okay.

NH: I don't know that much about what goes on now. Been trying to keep up with Tomm—what he was doing at the mill.

LB: Yeah. Oh yeah. Something about a business here. Do you remember when Russell's Market came in there near the mill?

PC: I don't. They were around here between where you turn off to go to Readyville and the Readyville Mill at one time in that building that's used for something else now.

NH: Upholstery now.

PC: Mildred – wasn't she there with their – and then they moved over there where they are now. I don't know when. Russell could tell you.

NH: Oh, no. Because that was Tasseys Garage when we knew it.

PC: Yeah. Where Russell is now. It was a garage. Well, before that, Ms. Annie – wasn't Ms. Burnett's name Annie?

NH: Burnett – Burnett?

PC: Yeah.

NH: Did she come up there? She had her store over where the post office is now because I worked at it during World War II.

PC: Yeah, but I thought at one time they lived just there where Russell is. I can't remember when or how come they were one place and then another. I just don't know. Now her daughter's still living – Joanne.

NH: Where was she? In Dixon?

PC: I believe so. [Normagine and Polly make confused faces]

LB: (laughs) That's okay. Did you ever do any shopping at Russell's Market? Was it a, you know?

PC: Oh yeah. We do. If there's something that we – yeah – happen to be passing. They don't have a big stock of stuff. She goes there all the time. (Polly and Lauren laugh)

NH: I have to find out what's going on.

LB: Yeah. (laughs)

NH: Now they have real good tomatoes. (laughs)

LB: Oh okay. Um-hmm. Um-hmm. Do people meet in there to talk to each other too?

NH: Yeah. They do. They do. I run into people there. Ran into one of the Ready nieces there not long ago that I hadn't seen in years and years.

LB: I know another big company – or not really a company – a store that sort of helped the mill a little was Tilford's Lumber. Now you said that Tilford's – when they moved in they tore down another house?

PC: They – uh-huh. Tom still lives there. Tom Tilford still lives in the house that they built.

NH: I was going to show you the picture of the house that was torn down, but I don't see it real fast.

PC: The house where the two horses were in that was where they tore that house away and built a new house when Mr. and Mrs. Tilford come. That would have been Tom Tilford's mother and daddy. Because I believe Tom was in service about that time.

NH: He came back out of service, and they were already there. I can remember that because I was friends with Tom's sister.

PC: He still lives there, so you can get a hold of him.

LB: Okay. (laughs) So was everybody okay with Tilford's Lumber and Tom Tilford coming in and doing that?

PC: As far as I know. Because several people worked there. At that time because they had the mills running – now I don't know whether they have the mills running today or not. At that time they did, so they hired several workers.

NH: Randy is still stocking some things in the store though.

PC: Yes. I'm not sure what they have.

NH: I know it's still –

PC: Whatever you have to go with lumber and building things.

NH: Nails. (all laugh)

LB: So you all kind of grew up farming in a certain kind of way with cattle and chickens and things like that. Did you or your family – before you got married or anything – did you ever grow crops or anything like that?

PC: Yes. After Daddy bought the Reed place up there. He grew wheat, corn. A lot of it was to feed animals. He had beef cattle, and I'm sure some of them probably hauled to the mill the wheat.

NH: Well, and our grandparents right there in Readyville was farming.

LB: Did they use the mill too? Did your grandparents farm wheat and things like that?

NH: Um-hmm.

LB: Okay. Did you ever hear any stories passed down in your family – I'm not sure exactly how far back in Readyville the history of your family goes – of the Civil War and how the mill was burned down during the Civil War and things like that? [Normagine shakes her head] No?

NH: I don't know anything.

PC: No. No stories that I know of because it was already built back, you see, so I don't know.

LB: Okay. So did you farm after you got married? Did you grow any crops after you got married?

PC: Yes. Yes. Corn. Mostly corn. I can't remember Hoyt growing wheat. Daddy grew wheat because he had a thrashing machine. Of course, back to begin with, they didn't have thrashing machines that went around. They had one stationary that the man would move from farm to farm and put their grain through to thrash it. Then, in later years, you had the thrashing machines that you used yourself in the field. So we had the combine that took care of the thrashing of the grain. So I can remember Daddy had that. So we've always been connected with farming.

LB: So how much land did your father own when he farmed? You don't know? (laughs)

PC: He owned around three hundred acres I guess at one time.

NH: A lot of that was hillsides what with the cattle on.

PC: Between yours over there – wouldn't you say there's about three hundred acres? Yeah. Because he sold off – what? A hundred over there?

NH: There's still a hundred.

PC: Jimmy Bugg ended up with –

NH: See, the four-lane went through the farm that –

PC: That Daddy bought.

NH: Well, he bought four different farms and put them together. Where Papa and them were and then these other three. That have been four different farms that he put together.

PC: Yeah. Yeah. Papa Perry's, Mr. Tobe Reed's, Mrs. Harris's, Mrs. McBroom's.

NH: Um-hmm.

PC: That's up the road from Readyville.

NH: About four miles.

PC: The only thing any of them ever owned in Readyville was right where we lived – the brick store building and the brick house there about – I forgot. Seems like it was between three and four acres.

NH: Yeah. This building that's still where [Claudia's Beauty Shop] is. Beauty shop is. [shows photograph]

PC: Three acres, two rods, thirty-eight poles. [reading from information she brought with her] That's the way the deed reads.

LB: Oh all right. (laughs)

NH: I forgot how much a pole is. It's twenty-something feet, isn't it?

PC: They bought that in October of 1935. Then I don't remember when – they sold it in – probably in [19]51 or [19]52. That's when Tilford bought that. That brick house. Not the store building.

NH: He just bought the house, didn't he?

PC: I think so.

NH: They kept the store building until Mother retired.

PC: Yeah because she lived in it a while.

NH: At that time, if you worked for the post office – or I don't know whether everybody had to or not, or whether it was just postmasters – they had to have the address on that post office. So when they moved to the farm, they made her an apartment in the same building with the post office so she could still keep the post office. (all laugh)

PC: Yeah. The store building there – George Root General Merchandise – post office was in a part of that building.

LB: Oh okay.

PC: When they moved –

NH: Half of it was a post office and half of it was a store.

PC: When they did away with the old store building, the first picture I showed you down there – the old building. When they built the new building up there and moved the store building, they also moved the post office. We were growing up, they were always together – store building and the post office. The post office was moved across the river where it is now. When Mother retired and the lady became postmaster that owned – the family owned the building where it is now, so she moved, had it moved across the river to where it is now. It would have been soon over 1960 because Mother retired in [19]60.

NH: About how long did Mrs. Hollandsworth work between then?

PC: I don't know.

NH: I don't know either.

PC: It would have been a few years after that that it was moved from the east side of the river to the west side of the river over there in the other building where it is today.

NH: Yeah. It's hard for her to visualize because of never – I said – probably should have met you there. Then that way we could say "That and this and this." And pointed at what we were talking about.

It's been fun to see the people coming to Readyville and finally figuring out where Readyville is because of the mill.

LB: So have you ever been to weddings at the mill or seen any of the weddings that go on at the mill?

NH: No. I know they do have them, but I have not – and I think they had one funeral down there.

LB: Really? Wow. When was that?

NH: A memorial service. A memorial service. I'm sorry. (all laugh)

LB: When was that?

NH: I don't know. It's been in the last year or so.

LB: Okay.

NH: I think Mary told me about that.

LB: Wow. Yeah. I didn't know about that either. Do you think it's good that they have weddings there?

NH: I reckon it's worked out real well. Receptions and –

PC: If people want to and they're willing to rent it to them, that's great.

NH: What was it? Five hundred dollars for three hours?

PC: I don't know. At one time –

NH: I don't know either.

PC: It's like any place. It gets expensive I'm sure.

NH: They've had some big ones there – big tents for the receptions and all. I saw one of the tents. I made the curtains for the cabin that they've got up there. I happened to have some fabric, and I made some curtains for the cabin so that if

people were changing clothes for the wedding in the cabin that there would be something over the windows. I don't know of anything else. Do you? I mean, we've pretty well covered –

LB: Oh yeah. Just one more thing – were there ever any like church revivals or anything like that in the area or any kind of meetings like that at the mill or just around in that place? No?

NH: Not that I know of. Uh-uh.

PC: Not at that time. Now, today they may meet for different things. No. Not at the mill. It was strictly granary and flour and meal and things like that.

NH: Ice. (laughs)

PC: The buildings at that time would not have been suitable for gatherings because they were used for storage of the grain that they bought or that people brought there that they used then for flour and all. You would not have had buildings suitable. Tomm has made that suitable for such use, and it's great. We're so glad he did. We're very excited about it. (all laugh) Or were.

NH: Yeah. We've bothered him a lot.

LB: Yeah. I'm sure he doesn't mind.

PC: He didn't seem to.

NH: At least he always smiled.

LB: Yes. Yes. All right. Well if you're ready to end is there anything else that you can think of right now that you'd want to add on or anything that you didn't think of before?

PC: I was trying to think. (laughs) I think we pretty well covered it from one end to the other.

LB: Okay. All right. Well –

PC: Later, if you know anybody that thinks of anything they think we might know, just call and let us know. We'd be glad to. We'll be glad to tell them if we know. (all laugh)

NH: I think we've pretty well told her everything we know. (laughs)

LB: Okay. All right. Well I just have one more question then. Do you consent to donate this interview to the public domain so that we can share it with others?

PC: Sure. That's the purpose of it.

NH: Yes.

LB: Okay. Well—

PC: We hope we can share anything else that you get on Readyville.

LB: Okay. All right. Well, thank you so much. Thank you for meeting with me today. It's been really good.

PHOTOGRAPHS IN TRANSCRIPT

Page 2 – George Root's General Merchandise Store, 1930s

Page 5 – Certificate, Margaret Root as Postmaster of Readyville, TN, 1937

Page 7-8 – Normagine and friend at Readyville Dam, 1930s-1940s

Family friend at Readyville Dam, 1930s-1940s

Polly and Normagine with friends at Readyville Dam, 1930s

Margaret Root at Readyville Dam, 1930s-1940s

Page 21 – Readyville Mill and surrounding houses flooded, late 1930s

Page 30 – Margaret Root and Mayme Ready in Nashville, TN, date unknown