

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
WITH
ROBERT W. PEAY, SR.

MAY 14, 2007

READYVILLE, TENNESSEE

INTERVIEWED BY EVAN HATCH

PARQ

PRESERVE THE AREA'S RURAL QUALITIES

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW #1

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Albert Gore". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

ALBERT GORE RESEARCH CENTER

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

EDITORIAL NOTICE

This is a transcript of a tape-recorded interview conducted by Preserve the Area's Rural Qualities (PARQ) and deposited at the Albert Gore Research Center at Middle Tennessee State University. The original recording and associated materials are archived at the center, whose collections may be accessed in person or via the web site <http://gorecenter.mtsu.edu>. After a draft of this transcript was made, the interviewer, or in some cases another qualified staff member, reviewed the draft and compared it to the tape recordings. In a few cases, the interviewee also contributed editorial corrections. This final transcript incorporates the corrections and other changes suggested by the interviewee and interviewer, if applicable. The transcript follows as closely as possible the recorded interview, including the usual starts, stops, and other rough spots in typical conversation. Only verbalized pauses that do not appear to add meaning to the transcript, such as "uh" and "um," have been omitted. The reader should remember that this is essentially a transcript of the spoken, rather than the written, word. It is an interpretation of the interview recording, which should be considered the primary document of this interview. Stylistic matters, such as punctuation and capitalization, follow the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th edition.

USE NOTICE

A release form signed by Robert Peay and Evan Hatch did not come to the archive with the tape recording of this interview. It is assumed, therefore, that copyright in the interview remains with Peay and Hatch.

Fair use provisions of the U.S. Copyright Act apply. Researchers may read, quote from, cite, photocopy, and download this transcript without permission for educational purposes. Other uses require prior permission from the president of PARQ, or the copyright holders, or both. Contact information may be obtained from the director of the Albert Gore Research Center.

ABSTRACT

Robert W. “Bob” Peay, Sr. (May 4, 1929—February 11, 2008) was a native of Milton, Rutherford County, Tennessee. He recalls his mill work as a family business and describes the work of the millwright as he experienced it while working for his grandfather at a mill on Cripple Creek near Kittrell, also in Rutherford County. Peay recalls the work of the powered sawmills, including Tilford’s Lumber Company run by Tom Tilford; the milling of grain; and the process of using water driven turbines to turn grooved stones and to power the saws. He remembers Uncle Dave Macon of Grand Ole Opry fame, who hauled goods from the country mills into Murfreesboro, and recounts other mills in the area, including those in Readyville, Walterhill, and Halls Hill. Other than the economy of the area, Peay discusses community churches and the popular revivals with itinerant preachers that drew large interdenominational crowds. But they also had fun, particularly at dances with music supplied by his family’s Victrola or the Macons. His family farmed for a living and he served in the 101st Airborne Division in the Korean Conflict. For most of his adult life Peay worked in the construction trades.

PHOTO



Robert “Bob” Peay at his Halls Hill home

PARQ photo by Evan Hatch

Sketch of Bob Peay

Milling runs in the blood of some families. It certainly did in Robert “Bob” Peay’s. They operated the saw mill that provided the wood for the house where he was born in Milton, Rutherford County, Tennessee, in 1927. Long before that, his family had come into the area from North Carolina and settled along the creeks that fed the Stones River. By damming the creeks, they created sources of power for the mills that did everything from saw lumber to grind grain and power electric lights.

As a boy, Peay stayed with his grandfather who owned a mill on Cripple Creek in what is now Cannon County. His grandfather would run the mill and young Peay would “hold onto his coat tail.” In the old days, the millwright met some of the primary needs of the community, according to Peay. He explained that folks in the area would bring bags of grain on mules to be ground into flour or wagons of logs to be cut into lumber. The millwright was skilled in adjusting the stones to produce the correct grind of the grain so it could be used for flour or feed. In addition to running mills, his family farmed.

Peay had many fond memories of Cripple Creek mill near Kittrell. He recalled that there were those who made their money from making moonshine and remembered Uncle Dave Macon from his days running supplies for the area mills, before he became a star of the Grand Ole Opry. Recollecting Macon’s skill at the banjo inspired Peay to break into a short verse of song: “Going up Cripple Creek, going in a run, going up Cripple Creek, have a little fun.” He also recalled that his grandfather used the mill to generate electricity and had strung lights from the building until the Air Force made him take them down, for they looked too much like a runway.

His memories included the Readyville Mill. It was larger and more industrialized than those of the Peay family, and Peay recalled that they had more storage and facilities to sell merchandise and export mill products to Nashville. He remembered that there were a good number of people in the area that were in the mill business in its heyday. He also remembered the condition of the Readyville Mill some years after it closed. It had fallen into such disrepair that it nearly fell into the river.

Peay also recalled the strong influence of churches in the community and the itinerant preachers and revivals that brought throngs for the social event of the summer. Since his family owned one of the first Victrolas in the area, it was frequently packed up in a wagon and carried to dances across the county, where it supplemented the live music on hand. Later, Peay served in the Korean conflict with the 101st Airborne Division. An older brother jumped from a sinking ship off the coast of North Africa in World War II. After his army service, Peay made a living in the construction and building trades.

At the time of interview, Peay was recovering from several strokes, and his eyesight was not good. He passed away in 2008.

**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH
ROBERT PEAY, SR.**

PRESERVE THE AREA'S RURAL QUALITIES

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT INTERVIEW #1

HATCH: This is Evan Hatch recording an interview on May 14, 2007. It's one p.m. in the afternoon, or a little bit after. I was running a little bit late. Monday afternoon. I'm sitting in the sun room it looks like, living room of Mr. Robert Peay, is that correct?

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: Bob Peay.

PEAY: Bob Peay.

HATCH: Okay. And we're sitting here also with Mrs. [Louise] Peay and their grandson. Can I get your name again?

ADAM: Adam.

HATCH: Thank you all for joining us. Today's conversations are going to be about the Readyville Mill and the history of the Readyville Mill as experienced by Mr. Bob Peay. Sir, can you please tell me your age and your date of birth?

PEAY: Seventy-seven and May 4, 1929.

HATCH: May 4, 1929.

PEAY: Seventy-eight, I guess.

HATCH: Okay, excellent sir. Where were you born?

PEAY: Born right here.

MRS. PEAY: Next door.

HATCH: Born next door to this house.

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: What kind of house was it?

PEAY: It's still standing.

HATCH: Still standing? So it's a wood frame house.

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: Logs?

PEAY: It's wood frame.

HATCH: Okay. I'm [unintelligible] a little bit here, too.

PEAY: It's one of the older houses. See my people run sawmills.

HATCH: Okay.

PEAY: And mills. And they had probably one of the first framed houses here or around.

HATCH: So is that how your history with mills started?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: Is that how, you were kind of born into it?

PEAY: Well, all my people been in the mill business. They come here from North Carolina and they stopped over in, I believe it's Jamestown or something before they got here.

HATCH: Okay.

PEAY: And they come on into Rutherford County and they built a series of dams on the Stones River, and you know other streams.

HATCH: Yes, sir.

PEAY: Cripple Creek was one my grandfather built. I used to stay with him.

HATCH: Why did—this is from somebody who doesn't know much about the milling industry—why did, say, what did your family do? They build mills for a living or did they operate them? What was their, what was their job?

PEAY: Well, they operated them, and . . .

HATCH: What did mills do back then?

PEAY: They, they sawed lumber.

HATCH: Okay.

PEAY: They milled flour.

HATCH: From wheat?

PEAY: Yeah. Wheat, corn, grain [unintelligible].

HATCH: So were they, did everybody in a community go to the mill?

PEAY: Oh, yeah, that was, it was more like a, it was the place that everybody went, you know. It was the community gathering place, too.

HATCH: So did they use it for, did they use it for, did they meet at the evenings there? Was it a social place as much as a business place?

PEAY: Well, probably more a business.

HATCH: Okay.

PEAY: Generally had lumber, you know the mill made lumber.

HATCH: Yes, sir.

PEAY: And they ground corn and grain. In the general milling industry, and my granddaddy built that mill over on Cripple Creek.

HATCH: Yes, sir.

PEAY: And his mill's still there. It was on a spring, run it, run out and run right into Cripple Creek over around Kittrell.

HATCH: Ok, I know where that is.

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: Drive over it every day.

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: Would you say that, are saw mills the same mills as the mills you use to grind flour and corn? Are they different kinds of mills?

PEAY: Well now, they generally operated jointly.

HATCH: Same place could do both things?

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: Did they take place on different, different floors?

PEAY: Well, yes. Yeah. Saw mill was out to the side and the mill was in the building—you know, grain and stuff like that—but it was more or less outside.

HATCH: The grindstone was on the inside?

PEAY: No.

HATCH: The grindstone?

PEAY: No. Outside was where they cut up the lumber and stuff like that.

HATCH: Okay.

PEAY: Inside the mill was where they ground the flour and done the regular mill work.

HATCH: So the mill served those two purposes. Did they serve any other purposes?

PEAY: Well, they made lumber and they stored, a lot of them would store, you know, the flour and stuff. They had a big room that just had flour in it and stuff like that.

HATCH: People come and buy it?

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: People who didn't have their own?

PEAY: Well, generally, a lot of times they'd come and we run a small mill over on Cripple Creek, my granddaddy and people would come on they maybe have a mule or horse they'd ride and they'd have a sack of grain.

HATCH: Uh-huh.

PEAY: On the horse. They'd come there and unload it and they'd run it through the mill.

HATCH: I'll be.

PEAY: Just like that.

HATCH: The buildings at the, what is your connection to the Readyville Mill, sir?

PEAY: Well, it was, wasn't connected to them anyway. They were just separate entities.

HATCH: Uh-huh. Were they competition?

PEAY: Well, Readyville Mill was more industrialized, you know, than us. Kind of, it was not as big an operation.

HATCH: Okay. Can you tell me kind of, for a person who doesn't know anything about mills, can you tell me how a mill works?

PEAY: Well, you've a big turbine and it fits down in the mill race and they run that water through there and that generates the power.

HATCH: So the water's coming from . . . ?

PEAY: Yeah.

MRS. PEAY: [unintelligible] is leading down there.

HATCH: Water comes from the river? Is that why they are built on rivers?

PEAY: Yeah. It could be a spring.

HATCH: It could be a spring?

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: Okay. And it runs the gears?

PEAY: Yeah. It runs the turbine and then the, they had different pulleys come off that main shaft, you know, it comes up and drives them.

HATCH: Uh-huh.

PEAY: And they run all kinds of things off of that one.

HATCH: Okay. And that's the main part of it—the chaff—is that what you said?

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: Is that c-h-a-f-f?

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: Okay.

PEAY: See you had the shaft, it come off the turbine.

HATCH: Okay. And that powered the individual mechanism?

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: How did the sawmill work?

PEAY: Okay, you had a, like a railroad track, you had a track there and you had a log on there and you run it down through there and you had a saw like that and you run it through. You cut whatever. They'd knock it over to where they could cut the board whatever they wanted it.

HATCH: Okay. Did they float the logs down the river?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: Did they float logs down the river?

PEAY: Well, in some places they did, but ordinarily they just load them on a wagon and haul on mules. They'd take and run them up a ramp like that and then on the wagon.

HATCH: Okay.

PEAY: They'd bundle them down and then carry them where they wanted. A lot of work. [chuckles]

HATCH: Yeah, just for a lot of wood.

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: What kind of, would a mill run a particular kind of lumber or would it just, could it cut anything you wanted it to?

PEAY: Well, some of the bigger mills were, you know, they'd run specials and stuff like that, wood and . . .

HATCH: The Readyville Mill . . .

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: Has got a couple of buildings to the side of it. Do you know, do you have knowledge of what those buildings served?

PEAY: No. It seemed like to me that they used them for storage and selling.

HATCH: Do all mills, did all mills have a store out of them.

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: Did all mills have a general store there?

PEAY: No, no.

HATCH: Okay. So that made it, that was even more of a central location, I imagine.

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: Was the mill one of the first things that you needed for a community? You say back in the days, there was always, say, blacksmiths who made tools, you needed those, correct?

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: And you would need . . .

PEAY: Millwright.

HATCH: You'd need a millwright. Okay and what did a millwright do, sir?

PEAY: He's the one that set the stones and builds a mill and run it.

HATCH: How did the, how were the stones made?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: How were the stones made?

PEAY: They were made out, they cut them and they cut a groove in there for the grain and they'd run down that groove to the edge.

HATCH: Okay.

PEAY: See, and they grind them. One stone would be stationary and the other'd turn.

HATCH: So it would be two going against each other?

PEAY: Yeah. And then of course they adjusted the height to get the proper grind.

HATCH: So a finer grind would be used for flour.

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: What would a rougher grind be used for?

PEAY: Oh, feed.

HATCH: Horses and cattle?

PEAY: Yeah and stuff like that.

HATCH: Okay.

PEAY: Grain.

HATCH: Alright. Okay, so how did, how did they actually, where did these mill stones come from? What do you need to make them with?

PEAY: Well.

HATCH: What do they call, were they expensive?

PEAY: They're, I imagine they mine them somewhere and they were cut out. These millwrights and everything, they know how they cut them.

HATCH: Okay. So they could actually make one too then.

PEAY: Yeah, they made them.

HATCH: Wow. But they are incredibly heavy.

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: They are incredibly heavy. They weigh tons and tons.

PEAY: Oh, yeah.

HATCH: How do they get those in there?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: How did they get those stones into the mill?

PEAY: Oh, they, they'd, they'd take a ramp and slide them in.

HATCH: With mules again.

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: With mules, huh?

PEAY: Levers and any way you could move them.

HATCH: When did, when you were coming up, were the mills electrified? When did they go electric?

PEAY: Well, my granddaddy had probably the first electric, electrified mill. And he strung lights from a mill down to a creek and the Air Force come and made him close down. These planes come to think it was a runway.

HATCH: Oh, no, really?

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: Did he have any crashes?

PEAY: No, but.

HATCH: What mill was that? Was that the one on the Stones or the . . . ?

PEAY: That was on Cripple Creek.

HATCH: Oh, on Cripple Creek.

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: Was that the main one that your family used?

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: Closest to you, isn't it?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: It's closest to you.

PEAY: Yeah. Well, they were over here at this Halls Hill mill.

HATCH: Uh-huh.

PEAY: Really . . .

HATCH: Okay.

PEAY: . . . close, too.

HATCH: The . . . did he start stringing lights, what was the purpose of stringing those lights?

PEAY: Just decoration.

HATCH: You think that's what, is that what it was?

PEAY: Yeah. It had little [unintelligible word] lights.

HATCH: Okay. I was thinking maybe it could make people work into the night so they could keep it moving more often.

PEAY: Well, they didn't do much work at night.

HATCH: Did they not? Okay.

PEAY: In the mill.

HATCH: That's me trying to create something that doesn't exist there.

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: When do you think the mills stopped being used so much?

PEAY: Well.

HATCH: And what caused that?

PEAY: They got the other means of power.

HATCH: Like?

PEAY: And more reliable. A mill more or less is dependent on water. If you have a real dry year, you might not have as much power.

HATCH: I didn't think about that.

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: I said, I didn't think about that, but that's true.

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: So in a rainy season is your production increased?

PEAY: Well, you see that had a more or less a reservoir, but the dam. I did have a bunch of pictures of the old mills.

HATCH: I'd love to see them if we can find them sometime. I'll come back later, you know, and look at them later.

PEAY: Well, my wife never would find them. I had this whole map that showed all the old dams and . . .

HATCH: I'd love to see it. If we could find it, that'd be pretty neat.

PEAY: Have you got the map honey?

MRS. PEAY: What?

PEAY: You know that old map?

MRS. PEAY: Of what?

PEAY: Of the Rutherford County.

MRS. PEAY: I'm not sure.

HATCH: Can you tell me, I was told that you had some really neat stories about the Readyville Mill specifically. Are there any that stick out in your mind as being particularly funny or remember or you could remember about the Readyville Mill? Did Uncle Dave Macon ever come through there?

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: What happened with Uncle Dave Macon?

PEAY: Well, [coughing spell] excuse me.

HATCH: What can I do for you?

PEAY: Nothing.

HATCH: Okay. You want something to drink?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: You want something to drink?

PEAY: No. I'm alright.

HATCH: Okay.

PEAY: Uncle Dave hauled mill products. That was his job.

HATCH: Mhm.

PEAY: And. . .

HATCH: And what's the date there?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: What was the date, like what are you talking about, like '30s, '40s?

PEAY: Well, it was before he got on the Grand Ole Opry and stuff like that.

HATCH: Yeah. He was fifty years old when he was on the Grand Ole Opry.

PEAY: Yeah. He was an old man then. But that was his primary and . . .

HATCH: So he stopped at your—did he stop there at the Readyville Mill?

PEAY: Oh, yeah.

HATCH: And is there where people, did people come to see him there or did he go to people's houses?

PEAY: He just went around.

HATCH: He was kind of a grocery man and everything, huh?

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: And he went all the way down to Woodbury, is that correct?

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: So you saw him play, was he, would he play his banjo?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: Did he play his banjo?

PEAY: Well, my brother did, but Uncle Dave played the banjo.

HATCH: You saw him play?

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: Did you have any particular favorite tunes?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: Did you have any particular favorite tunes that you liked? Songs?

PEAY: Oh, I like all of them. I like especially a banjo. My brother played the banjo and he had one of these Gibson's and boy it's, I guess that thing, no telling what it would cost now, but it . . .

HATCH: It would go up fifteen to twenty thousand dollars now.

PEAY: Yeah, but my brother could play one good.

HATCH: What style did he play?

PEAY: He'd play . . .

HATCH: Claw hammer?

PEAY: He'd chord it out.

HATCH: So he played like Scruggs?

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: Bluegrass?

PEAY: Yeah, he could pick it out and you could just hear the words.

HATCH: Yeah? That's pretty neat.

PEAY: You could just about hear the words. I never could play anything, and I loved to hear them. My brothers, one of them played the banjo and another one played the guitar. My sister, she'd play a piano and one of these . . .

HATCH: Clarinet?

PEAY: Clarinets, and in the band, but I never could pick up any kind of music.

HATCH: Why'd you decide not to play an instrument?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: Everybody else played an instrument. You just didn't want to play one?

PEAY: I wasn't taught [unintelligible].

HATCH: Oh, I don't believe that.

PEAY: You have to, you have to really get some natural talent I think.

HATCH: I think some people definitely have it, but you got to work hard at it, too.

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: Do you, do you remember when the Readyville Mill opened? Were you there?

PEAY: No.

HATCH: I'll be. Is this it? [sounds of paper being unrolled]

PEAY: Yeah, yeah.

HATCH: We're looking at a map of Rutherford County compiled and published by D. G. Beers and Company; South Sixth Street, Philadelphia, dated 1878.

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: Rutherford County TBNN. You got the districts of—the city of Murfreesboro and the districts, the county divided up into districts looking to be, looks like the high number's twenty-three. District twenty-five is the high number, so it used to be divided up. How many, how many mills were in this county, operating, sir?

PEAY: Well, there's Readyville Mill, and then Hall's Hill Mill and then there's one at Walterhill, and then there's one over on the Cripple Creek, and there were several mills.

HATCH: How many of those did your people start?

PEAY: Oh . . . Who were them people that cut my timber, and they had run mills?

MRS. PEAY: I don't remember them.

HATCH: If you ran them, did you build them?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: If you built them, did you run them too or did some people just come along and build them and then hire people to do it?

PEAY: Well, generally people that build them, somebody else would, you know, hire them. Probably, could be the way.

HATCH: Your family did everything though?

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: What were your jobs at the mill?

PEAY: My job?

HATCH: Mhm.

PEAY: I was just a little flunky.

HATCH: So you did whatever they asked you to do?

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: Okay.

PEAY: My granddaddy run the mill there. I'd hold onto his coat tail.

HATCH: Is that what you did for a living?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: Is that what you did for a living?

PEAY: Well, we farmed and also had the mill.

HATCH: How much, how much land did you have?

PEAY: Oh, I guess two or three hundred acres all together.

HATCH: What'd you farm?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: What did you farm?

PEAY: Well, corn.

HATCH: Cash crop?

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: Did you ever make any moonshine out of it?

PEAY: Well, I've been around where they made it.

HATCH: Uh-huh. So you knew some of, some old timers who ran moonshine and made moonshine?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: Did you, so you know some people who made it and ran it?

PEAY: Oh, yeah.

HATCH: Well, that was kind of an unreported cash crop, huh?

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: Where was the best moonshine you ever had made?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: Where was the best moonshine you ever had, where was that made?

PEAY: Well, it was made here in Rutherford County.

HATCH: Made in Rutherford? I always heard Cannon County had the best.

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: But they don't make it up too much anymore.

PEAY: Cannon County was part of Rutherford County.

HATCH: Oh, okay. So you kind of saw them as the same thing?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: You made, you saw them kind of as the same thing?

PEAY: Well, part of it was come off of Rutherford County was, you know, made it a county from two or three other counties.

HATCH: Oh, okay. So we're just kind of the junk county, thrown together.

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: Just thrown together from other people's other things?

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: I believe that.

PEAY: Yeah. That's the way it come about.

HATCH: Will you tell me your opinion of the Army Corps of Engineers and how they affected the river?

PEAY: Well, they managed, oh, they managed rivers and flood control and they kind of watched that. But I don't think you had, really I didn't know that they had done much I know. At this other level they probably had a bigger job. They studied the river and water flow and all different things and give us news. The government kind of managed that.

HATCH: Have they been, were they helpful for the Readyville Mill?

PEAY: Oh, I wouldn't think it helped them or hurt; they just maybe had a few regulations that never was more or less. People done like they wanted to, more or less.

HATCH: Did, was flooding ever a problem out at the Readyville Mill?

PEAY: Flooding?

HATCH: Mhm.

PEAY: Oh, it's always a problem on the Stones River.

HATCH: What does that mean? What did it do?

PEAY: Well, they just interrupt everything you was doing.

HATCH: Did it ever affect the production of a mill, did it?

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: Did it improve it or?

PEAY: No, I . . . they . . . when the water way up they didn't do much milling.

HATCH: Mhm.

PEAY: Operating the mill.

HATCH: There was a time when the Readyville Mill was about to fall into the river. Could you tell me a little bit about that?

PEAY: Well, they, I just kind of know what I heard and read about it.

HATCH: Could you tell me what that is?

PEAY: Well, they, I think the foundations at some places wasn't as good as it should have been.

HATCH: So you think the people who built it didn't build it properly?

PEAY: No, the upkeep on it probably.

HATCH: Okay.

PEAY: I did have some pictures of the old mill and it's amazing, you know to look at all that. You had that book there, you kind of see.

HATCH: I would love to take you out there and show you what it looks like now. They got done a whole lot of work on it.

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: He bought it. He was interested in the mill stones.

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: And then, he had the chance to, you know, to fix it up and just took it on, his own dime. Would you ever want to go out there?

PEAY: Where's that?

HATCH: Out in Readyville.

PEAY: Readyville.

MRS. PEAY: Out to the mill out there Bob.

PEAY: Well, not lately.

MRS. PEAY: Would you like to go?

PEAY: I would, but my eyesight's not as good as it should be.

HATCH: I understand.

PEAY: I don't get around as good as I—see I've had about five strokes and it kind of curtailed my activity.

HATCH: That would do it, sir.

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: Can you remember any events where a lot of people gathered there? When did people go to the mill? They go on weekdays or weekends or was there a day that they would go specifically?

PEAY: Well, they didn't generally go when they wanted, some corn ground, grain ground, the lumber processed, buy some of their products and generally a whole bunch of people worked in the milling industry.

HATCH: Mhm.

PEAY: That's quite a few people. You'd be surprised. I mean, it wouldn't seem like much today, but back then it was, used to take probably twenty-five to thirty people you know to work it.

HATCH: Mhm. Was Tilford's tied, Tilford's Lumber, was that tied to the Readyville Mill?

PEAY: Tilford Lumber.

HATCH: Mhm.

PEAY: Tom Tilford.

HATCH: Tom Tilford.

PEAY: Yeah, I know him.

HATCH: Were they partners?

PEAY: Well, yeah. Tilford Lumber Company and the mill. Tom Tilford.

HATCH: He's a good guy.

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: I like him.

PEAY: He is a character.

HATCH: He is a character, yes sir. We've actually---how many people lived in Readyville at that time would you say?

PEAY: Well, most people farmed for a living, raised a few cattle, milk, gardens, farms.

HATCH: Uh-huh.

PEAY: Cotton.

HATCH: Cotton.

PEAY: Corn.

HATCH: It was kind of hard to . . .

PEAY: There wasn't much cotton here in this particular area, but then—around there was cotton, was a big crop.

HATCH: Maybe more west, towards Mississippi.

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: There's a bunch over there, I know. Have you, if everybody farmed, and then they brought all their corn and wheat—

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: To the mill, did the mill, why did the mill bother to keep, why did the mill keep extra stuff around to sell?

PEAY: Well, a lot of it was sent to other places like Nashville.

HATCH: Mhm.

PEAY: Or north.

HATCH: They actually—

PEAY: And on this grain, you had to have a, you had to have a place to store it. Grain is perishable.

HATCH: Okay. Horses don't eat it, it starts to mold, right?

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: Corn's not perishable?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: Corn isn't perishable.

PEAY: Not as bad.

HATCH: Okay.

PEAY: Wheat.

HATCH: Okay. So they had a nice little business on the side doing some exporting.

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: To Nashville and other places.

PEAY: Oh, yeah. They—

HATCH: Did—

PEAY: Well, just like this grain and stuff like that. Uncle Dave, that's what he used to do is haul.

HATCH: Did he take the grain off for you?

PEAY: Well, they would more or less, they'd have it at the mill and they might ship some to Murfreesboro or different towns around.

HATCH: Do you ever remember him telling you any jokes or anything? Did, you knew him or met him, correct?

PEAY: Who is that?

HATCH: Uncle Dave.

PEAY: Oh, yeah.

HATCH: Knew him pretty well?

PEAY: Yeah. I didn't know him that well, but I knew him when I saw him. He had a little tin whistle [?] and played that banjo, five string banjo. He strum it.

HATCH: And he sang?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: Did he sing too?

PEAY: Oh, yeah. [singing] "Going up Cripple Creek, going in a run, going up Cripple Creek, have a little fun."

HATCH: I knew what he was doing up on Cripple Creek.

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: We knew what he was doing up on Cripple Creek.

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: Did he ever tell you any jokes?

PEAY: Well, I've been to these, you know, he used to have a show.

HATCH: Uh-huh, school.

PEAY: Yeah, and I'd go to them. He'd always tell some.

HATCH: Okay. Do you remember any specifically?

PEAY: No, it's been, I was little.

HATCH: Did he ever spin like a, did he ever spin like a clock?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: Did he ever make it spin like a clock pendulum?

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: The banjo.

PEAY: Oh, yeah. Flip it around in his hands.

HATCH: Yeah.

PEAY: He could do all kinds of tricks with it.

HATCH: He was a good showman.

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: Really was.

PEAY: Dixie Dewdrop.

HATCH: The Dixie Dewdrop, that's right. Did you ever see him consume any alcohol?

PEAY: Do what?

HATCH: Did you ever see him drink any alcohol?

PEAY: Oh, yeah.

HATCH: Would you say that he drank, did he drink all the time?

PEAY: Well, I couldn't say, but he had the reputation of drinking all the time.

HATCH: That's a good answer, by the way.

HATCH: Keeps you out of trouble. That's a good answer. Did you ever . . . ?

PEAY: I went to school with his brother Doad [?] Macon.

HATCH: Doad?

PEAY: At school.

HATCH: Okay.

PEAY: Teacher.

HATCH: Okay.

PEAY: Doad. And he had two or three grandsons I guess about my age.

HATCH: Did . . .

PEAY: Over at Kittrell.

HATCH: Uh-huh. That was his house. His house is still there. It's up for sale.

PEAY: Do what?

HATCH: Uncle Dave's house is still there.

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: Up for sale now.

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: That'd be fun. I've got a, we put together a, I'll bring you a CD. We made an Uncle Dave CD. So I'll bring you a copy of it so you can hear it.

PEAY: Okay.

HATCH: It's pretty neat. It's some of the last stuff he ever recorded.

PEAY: Oh.

HATCH: In 1950.

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: Did you ever see Uncle Dave, was he ever sad? Did he ever appear to be uncharacteristically not happy?

PEAY: No.

HATCH: He was always on, huh?

PEAY: He was always . . .

HATCH: Always on stage.

PEAY: Always a showman.

HATCH: Mhm.

PEAY: Yeah, he . . .

HATCH: What was, let's say back when Readyville was a little bit maybe more active.

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: What other stores had, can you tell me some of the businesses that were there?

PEAY: Well, I can't think of them. I knew them.

HATCH: Was there a post office?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: Was there a post office?

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: Was there a commissary, some kind of a mercantile store?

PEAY: Yeah. There was just a regular little store.

HATCH: Was there like a dress shop or clothing shop or anything like that?

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: What did you do for, what did they do in Readyville for entertainment?

PEAY: Well, they went to church and they had these meetings, church meetings.

HATCH: Were they brush arbor meetings?

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: So it was outdoor stuff?

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: Did you have, was there a, what was the dominant religion there? The, what was the belief? Was it Baptist?

PEAY: I'd say Baptist and Church of Christ.

HATCH: Okay. Did they both have brush arbor meetings?

PEAY: Presbyterian, yeah.

HATCH: How many people would come to a revival? How long did the revivals last?

PEAY: Well.

HATCH: Or the meetings.

PEAY: Generally, they would have a, everybody would go. We used to go to the Baptist and the Church of Christ both. And the same people would go to both of them. It was more or less a social gathering.

HATCH: Mhm.

PEAY: And they'd have everybody in the country congregate. They were great big crowds.

HATCH: Hundreds? Thousands?

PEAY: No, not thousands. Maybe a hundred or a hundred and fifty, something like that.

HATCH: Did they last all day Sunday or did they last several days?

PEAY: Usually, they last about a week.

HATCH: And where did you stay?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: Where would you stay?

PEAY: Where's they sit?

MRS. PEAY: Wouldn't they be at night, Bob?

PEAY: Well, yeah.

HATCH: So you'd go home and come back.

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: Why'd they have them at night?

PEAY: Well, they had them---people weren't working then.

HATCH: Yeah, I guess so. And so they were big social events.

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: Was there just a lot of preaching? Was it traveling preachers coming in?

PEAY: Well, there was traveling preachers come in or they [tape interruption; previous sentence repeats] they generally had one that made a circuit, at different churches every year.

HATCH: Did you go to church every Sunday?

PEAY: No. I should have, but I went just about every Sunday.

HATCH: So you said everybody went to church. Did they do anything else for fun?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: Did anybody, the people at Readyville, did they do anything else for fun?

PEAY: Oh, fishing, hunting, gambling.

HATCH: What kind of gambling?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: What kind of gambling?

PEAY: Dice.

HATCH: Dice. What's the name of the game? Craps?

PEAY: Craps.

HATCH: Yeah? You any good at craps?

PEAY: No.

HATCH: What are you, what do you go hunting for?

PEAY: Coons, rabbits.

HATCH: For eating or selling?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: For eating or selling the hide?

PEAY: Both.

HATCH: That knob, that Lookout Mountain knob between Woodbury and between Readyville and Murfreesboro.

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: Did you ever go hunting up there? Somebody told me there was a Confederate cemetery on top of that, is that true?

PEAY: Yeah. There's an old road that goes around through there.

HATCH: Horse road? I mean, it's a dirt road. [door bell chimes] Is it an old dirt road?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: Was it an old dirt road up there on that knob?

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: How many people are buried up there?

PEAY: I don't know. I imagine there's a few.

HATCH: Were they, were the soldiers killed up there or were they taken up there after they were died, after they died?

PEAY: I guess both.

HATCH: So was there a skirmish, there was a battle up there or do you know?

PEAY: Well I think they had a skirmish maybe up there. One time I heard.

MRS. PEAY: [speaking to person at the door] Okay I can do that.

HATCH: Did your grandfather fight in the Civil War?

PEAY: Let's see. I'm sure his family did, but I'm not so sure about him.

HATCH: You think he would have been a Union sympathizer or a Confederate sympathizer?

PEAY: Confederate.

HATCH: Yeah.

PEAY: A fool would want Union.

HATCH: Well, Tennessee is a pretty mixed state.

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: Tennessee was a pretty mixed state. You go over the mountains over there and it was kind of Union.

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: But it was all mixed up.

PEAY: They don't know better.

HATCH: You're right. You're right. I'm with you. You still feeling okay?

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: Okay. Good. Did they ever have dances out at the mill, anything like that?

PEAY: Oh, they had them all around the country, but not particularly at the mill.

HATCH: Oh, so you don't think they had any there at the mill?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: Maybe you don't think they had any there?

PEAY: Ordinarily no.

HATCH: Okay. What were the dances like?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: What were some of the, what were they square dances?

PEAY: Square dances.

HATCH: Who would play at the square dances?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: Who would play at them?

PEAY: Uncle Dave.

HATCH: Did he really?

PEAY: Yeah. And all the Macon family.

HATCH: Dorris?

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: What about, did you ever hear of a fella named Billy Womack?

PEAY: Who?

HATCH: Billy Womack.

PEAY: Yeah, I've heard it.

HATCH: He was a fiddle player.

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: Did you ever see him play?

PEAY: Probably, but I don't remember.

HATCH: What did a square dance band look like? How many people were in it?

PEAY: Well, ordinarily you had a fiddle player, maybe two fiddle players, a banjo player, guitar, rhythm guitar, a lot of time you'd have a piano.

HATCH: Piano?

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: A big one or a little spin—like a little one, were they big ones? You can't move those around to easy you know? I've got one. They're heavy.

PEAY: Yeah. When I was growing up, we had probably one of the first, you know, Victrolas and about that big around and it was probably four foot tall. And we'd load that on a wagon and they would carry it all around the country.

HATCH: How much did that weigh?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: How much did one of those Victrolas weigh?

PEAY: Oh, I'd say about hundred fifty, two hundred pounds.

HATCH: Good gracious. That's heavy.

PEAY: Yeah. They had all these old records.

HATCH: Still got them?

PEAY: Well, sadly I think they've been destroyed. But it had them old records.

HATCH: Old 78s?

PEAY: No telling what they'd be worth.

HATCH: It depends. Yeah, I mean it depends on what kind they are, the labels. Did you have just country or did you have any blues?

PEAY: I've seen them and it's on a spool like that, about that long, about that big around. You ever see one like that?

HATCH: No, a cylinder?

PEAY: A cylinder.

HATCH: Yeah. I have. I know somebody that still records on them.

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: I know a guy who still records on them.

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: Those Edison cylinders.

PEAY: Yeah, I guess that's what you call them.

HATCH: Yeah, they are pretty neat. It's amazing how that works.

PEAY: We had this, I guess it was one of the few around. And they'd come and they'd carry that all over the country and they'd have a big dance, you know?

HATCH: Uh-huh.

PEAY: Load that thing on a buggy and . . .

HATCH: So when did those take place with the bands?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: When did those start taking places of the band?

PEAY: Of the band?

HATCH: Yeah, I mean, would they play records and have a band at the same place?

PEAY: Well, yes, and a lot of times you know you had a variety of records and the band wouldn't play that many, you know, songs. More on records, variety. I guess people liked to hear both of them.

HATCH: Mr. Peay, did you serve in World War II or Korea?

PEAY: Korea. I fought in the Korean War.

HATCH: Where were you serving?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: Where did you serve? Like what city, what towns were you near in the Korean War?

PEAY: Well, I was on the Yellow River.

HATCH: Okay.

PEAY: Looking over in China and the Chosin Reservoir from the north and the [unintelligible word] outfit. I was in the 101st Airborne.

HATCH: You were a paratrooper?

PEAY: We was infantry.

HATCH: Oh.

PEAY: They didn't need no paratroopers and they made infantry out of us.

HATCH: If I'm not mistaken the 101st is out of North Carolina, isn't it?

PEAY: It was . . .

HATCH: Fayetteville.

PEAY: Seems like it may have been Clarksville then.

HATCH: Clarksville, Tennessee? Yep? Huh, 101st Airborne infantry. You were the front line.

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: You were the front line.

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: What kind of gun did you carry?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: What kind of guns did you carry?

PEAY: Well, I carried an M1, rifle, machine guns. I've used them all, bazookas.

HATCH: So you saw a lot of combat?

PEAY: Fifty-seven recoilless rifle. Well, I seen my part of it. I spent five and a half months on the front.

HATCH: Were you injured?

PEAY: Yeah. But after I stayed over there they got where they didn't leave them over there but three months at a time, on the front.

HATCH: Did your brothers go?

PEAY: Who?

HATCH: Your brothers?

PEAY: No, I had two brothers and both of them served. One of them had his ship sunk in North Africa right there, right inside the [unintelligible words]. His ship sunk, so he jumped off the ship and swum right on to the shore.

HATCH: So he survived?

PEAY: Oh, yeah.

HATCH: Wow. Are your brothers still living?

PEAY: No.

HATCH: No.

PEAY: They're all gone.

HATCH: Are you the oldest?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: Are you the oldest or the youngest?

PEAY: Youngest.

HATCH: By how long?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: How many years?

PEAY: How old am I?

HATCH: No, how old, how much older were they then you were?

PEAY: Well, let's see. Four and eight years older than I was.

HATCH: Any sisters?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: Any sisters? Do you have any sisters? Did you have any, any sisters?

PEAY: 50s?

HATCH: Did you have any sisters? Girls? You have brothers, did you have sisters too?

PEAY: Yeah. I had one sister.

HATCH: One sister. What was her name?

PEAY: Frances.

HATCH: Is she still living or did she pass away too?

PEAY: They are all gone.

HATCH: They're all gone. Hmm. I'm sorry, sir.

PEAY: She was thirteen months older than I was.

HATCH: That's pretty quick.

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: One year apart.

PEAY: Yeah, just about.

HATCH: Would, did you travel anywhere else in the world? Have you traveled or did you travel with the military? You went to Korea. Did you go anywhere else when you were over there?

PEAY: I've been all around.

HATCH: Traveled a lot, huh? Been to Europe?

PEAY: Alaska.

HATCH: Alaska? Why's that?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: Just to go or did you get work in Alaska?

PEAY: Well, I've been to Alaska, but we went that northern route to Korea. You go up and around Alaska and then down, back down.

HATCH: On a ship?

PEAY: On a ship.

HATCH: Took off out of California?

PEAY: Yeah. You could go across by Hawaii, the middle, you know go over across the middle, but we went the northern route.

HATCH: Why is that?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: Seems like that's a long way out of the way.

PEAY: Well, it's not. The United States pretty well controls the ocean that way.

HATCH: Okay.

PEAY: They—

HATCH: So there wouldn't be any, so they wouldn't run into any Korean ships or anything like that.

PEAY: Well, you got Russian submarines and ships and of course the British were friendly and then you got the French. You didn't know about them. They was supposed to be friendly.

HATCH: Yeah, but they might not be.

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: They might not be though.

PEAY: Well, supposedly.

HATCH: Did, I'm still a little confused about your relationship over at the mill. Did your father run, or did your father run that mill, at the Readyville Mill?

PEAY: No, but he'd worked there.

HATCH: What did he do when he worked there?

PEAY: Well, I couldn't, I'd say just mill work, run the mill.

HATCH: Did whatever he could, whatever he needed to.

PEAY: Yeah. Sack grain. They had these old scales you put the bags on and weigh them.

HATCH: How much do the bags weigh? Ten pounds?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: How much do the bags weigh?

PEAY: Oh, you generally had a hundred pound bag, you know. It was about that high.

HATCH: About four feet. Four feet tall maybe.

PEAY: Yeah, something like that.

HATCH: Okay.

PEAY: You know, regular sack of grain.

HATCH: Uh-huh, and that would sell for, how much would that sell for?

PEAY: I don't know.

HATCH: Okay. But you'd use that for, how long do you think it would last? For a farm family, how long would a hundred pounds of flour last?

PEAY: Well, according to the size of the family, but ordinarily they didn't, they wouldn't get it—fact they'd have it in a barrel, you know.

HATCH: Mhm.

PEAY: A flour barrel. Then you had one of these cabinets, you know, that flour thing in them and probably oil, ten gallons, you know and you'd turn that little handle down there. And you'd get the flour out as you needed. You ever see one of them?

HATCH: I haven't. No. I sure haven't. What about, did anybody in Readyville make sorghum, make molasses?

PEAY: Molasses?

HATCH: Did anybody in Readyville make molasses you knew of?

PEAY: Everybody had molasses more or less. We used to have a mill right out here and people would come, all the neighbors would come grind the sorghum.

HATCH: Mhm.

PEAY: Molasses. And cook it. I'd cook it and stir it, you know.

HATCH: How long did that process take?

PEAY: Oh, it takes a pretty good while from . . . They have a big pan and there'd be maybe five or six foot wide and probably twenty, ten foot long and they had to have a fire to cook it. And they'd skim it.

HATCH: What were they skimming off?

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: What did they skim, like when they were skimming it what were they taking off?

PEAY: The foam.

HATCH: Yeah. Is that just like plant matter, impurities, or what is it?

PEAY: I don't know. They give it to the cattle probably.

HATCH: Okay. A cow will eat anything, huh?

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: We had talked about the churches. How many churches, were there any church buildings or were they all just, were they those, there had to be a sanctuary somewhere, is that correct?

PEAY: Well, they had little churches and had these traveling preachers. He come around. I know when they'd have a meeting then the people would go, no matter what congregation they'd just practically everybody in the community would attend. It was more or less a social gathering. You have a good preacher, you know, and these traveling preachers, some of them are pretty, they get pretty loud.

HATCH: Yeah. Fire and brimstone?

PEAY: Oh yeah.

HATCH: Was there ever any . . .

PEAY: Have you trembling in your boots.

HATCH: Yeah. He wasn't a very, they weren't charismatic right? Were there ever any showings of faith, such as, did you ever know any Pentecostals?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: You ever know any Pentecostals?

PEAY: Printed saucers?

HATCH: Pentecostals.

PEAY: Pentecostals.

HATCH: Uh-huh, did you ever know any?

PEAY: No, I never.

HATCH: Okay. There's a church up there in Woodbury now.

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: There's one up there now.

PEAY: Yeah. Pentecostals.

HATCH: Uh-huh. Let me see on this. I might have to switch my machine out here. Okay, we're okay. And your job at the Readyville Mill was pretty much doing all that too, whatever you needed to do?

PEAY: Well, my job was, I was just a small child and I was helping my grandfather.

HATCH: Did you ever have to, what did you do for the, what was your job before you retired?

PEAY: Electrician.

HATCH: Electrician.

PEAY: Construction worker. Plan area estimator for the government.

HATCH: All around jack of trades. You did everything.

PEAY: Yeah, plumbing, electrical, mechanical, refrigeration, air condition.

HATCH: Did you learn that in the army?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: Did you learn that in the army?

PEAY: No. I learned that working in it.

HATCH: Okay, so you just kind of taught yourself.

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: You just kind of taught yourself over time.

PEAY: Well, I went to Hume-Fogg apprentice school, electrical apprentice and blueprint reading.

HATCH: Mhm.

PEAY: Welding. Vertical, flat, and overhead welding, acetylene. A little bit of everything mechanically.

HATCH: I would say so. Sounds like it.

PEAY: I had to be able to do it all.

HATCH: Did you build this house?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: Did you build this house?

PEAY: I done a lot of the work.

HATCH: That's something you always wanted to do?

PEAY: I done the electrical and plumbing. And I'm not that good at carving them, but I can do it.

HATCH: But I bet you had some people, you knew some people who could help you do it, huh?

PEAY: Well, all my family were . . .

HATCH: Mhm.

PEAY: Skilled. Plumbing, electrical, carpenter work.

HATCH: What did your brothers do?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: What did your brothers do?

PEAY: Well, my one next to me, he run a business in Florida.

HATCH: Okay.

PEAY: He had, he run an antique and electrical construction business. Sold antiques.

HATCH: Did you ever like antiques?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: You like antiques?

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: I do too.

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: What's your favorite kind of collectible?

PEAY: Oh, I think some of the old wood pieces are nice, but we had in, it was an old four-post canopy bed. I guess it's probably twelve foot tall. You couldn't get it in an ordinary house. And they had the canopy up over it. Big old square posts.

HATCH: Beautiful, huh?

PEAY: That big. Cherry wood, nice.

HATCH: What'd you do with it?

PEAY: Uh, I think it finally just let it deteriorate.

HATCH: This is the second part of the interview, conducted with Mr. Bob Peay at his home on May 7, May 14, 2007. I didn't identify this interview earlier. We're going to call this interview Bob.Peay, P-E-A-Y, 05142007, part two. The first was part one. We're going to continue this interview with Mr. Peay, talk about, again, some more memories of the mill, and of Readyville. Do you remember when the mill closed?

PEAY: Closed?

HATCH: Yes, sir.

PEAY: Seems like it been about twenty years ago.

HATCH: That's about right. Do you remember why it closed?

PEAY: Competition.

HATCH: From?

PEAY: It was labor. These other mills compete—

MRS. PEAY: [interruption to take care of a phone call; not transcribed]

HATCH: Okay. Then we'll let that be our end of it. Competition from other mills or from labor?

PEAY: There was competition from other mills and other areas, probably.

HATCH: You don't see many mills in use anymore.

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: You don't see a lot of mills in use anymore.

PEAY: No.

HATCH: They've been turned into, you know, museums—

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: Or . . .

PEAY: Well, they, they, they wasn't being efficient, but nowadays, they got these small, motor . . . held things. Have you ever been in these old mills there, with belts running every which way?

HATCH: Uh-huh. You're right. They're not super-efficient, but what do you think somebody can learn about a mill?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: What can somebody learn from a mill, if somebody was to go visit one? If you were to tell people about a mill, what would you want them to know about mills?

PEAY: Well, where they were located—

HATCH: Uh-huh.

PEAY: What the power source was. River, stream, dam . . . I guess, you know, you often wonder why do they close, but, you know, they are . . . I'd say it was competition, wouldn't you think?

HATCH: I'm going probably to take some pictures while we're talking for a few minutes.

PEAY: Okay.

HATCH: Is that okay?

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: Alright. I'm going to take them while you're talking, and maybe also pose for a couple, too. So I'll probably get down on the floor, I'll be getting everywhere, okay?

PEAY: Okay. Help yourself.

HATCH: Well, thank you. Can . . . if there was children, who had never been into a mill and had never seen a mill working before, do you think, what would you want a child to know about mills from a bygone, from a time that is in the past?

PEAY: In the past?

HATCH: Yeah.

PEAY: Are we going into one that's operating?

HATCH: Uh-huh. Let's say we're going into one that's operating.

PEAY: Well, I'd want them to stay, stay out of the way.

HATCH: Because?

PEAY: It's a . . . There's a lot of things around a mill that a child could get into that could hurt him. Belts, machinery . . .

HATCH: Do you think that . . . would you use one today?

PEAY: What?

HATCH: If you were a farmer still?

PEAY: Use a mill?

HATCH: Yeah.

PEAY: Well—

HATCH: Do you think that there's anything valuable about mills?

PEAY: Not, not today. If you had a big enough operation, you would probably need to go by a mill, but, just a small operation . . . You buy your flour at the store in a fifty pound bag, ten pound bag. You don't go to the mill and get it grounded.

HATCH: Was it . . . Did it taste any different?

PEAY: Not necessarily. Always thought that the cornmeal that we made was better. We always sorted the grain, cleaned the corn, before we run it through there. This is small operation, you know, you could do that. Clean that corn really clean. Then you grind it.

HATCH: What did you use the cornmeal for?

PEAY: Cornbread.

HATCH: Anything else?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: Anything else? That was a good picture. Did you use it for bread and okra, or anything like that? Or bread and squash?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: Did you use it for cooking in anything?

PEAY: Cooking.

HATCH: So you're number one crop, when you were coming up, was corn, right?

PEAY: Right.

HATCH: Okay. And . . . any other cash crop you can tell me about?

PEAY: Well, there was cotton, but it wasn't . . . we didn't particularly fool with cotton much. Other people did, but we didn't. We did more corn, wheat and corn.

HATCH: Okay. What did you grow in your garden?

PEAY: What did they grow in the garden? Tomatoes, roast the ears . . .

HATCH: Roast ears of corn?

PEAY: Yeah. Okra and cucumber and watermelons and mush melons . . .

HATCH: Mush melons?

PEAY: You name it.

HATCH: Is that a cantaloupe? What's a mush melon?

PEAY: Well, it's about the same.

HATCH: Are they orange?

PEAY: Cantaloupe? Mush melon?

HATCH: Same thing?

PEAY: Well, some of them are bigger, and . . . I never, I just called them a cantaloupe or a mush melon. Seems like a mush melon were a little larger.

HATCH: A little larger? I've never had one. Were they mushy?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: Why do they call them mush melons?

PEAY: I don't know.

HATCH: Let's say that you're farming, right? There's not a lot of income around there, cause you don't really sell too much, you're mostly growing for yourself, right?

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: How did you buy stuff that you couldn't . . . how did you buy stuff at a store?

PEAY: Well, with a cash crop, like eggs . . .

HATCH: Mhm.

PEAY: . . . and hogs. You sold hogs . . . slaughter them. Goats, sheep. You always had something like that you sold.

HATCH: Did you trade or did you sell? Or both?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: Did you trade or did you sell? Or both?

PEAY: Well, sometimes, maybe both. Buy it, sell.

HATCH: Okay. Probably get up close here. Do you ever miss that lifestyle?

PEAY: Oh, yeah. It's a . . . I enjoyed the life.

HATCH: What about it?

PEAY: Well, it's different when you get older and ain't able to do things that you used to.

HATCH: Uh-huh.

PEAY: Like plowing . . . different things like that.

HATCH: Yeah.

PEAY: All our plowing, you know, and double shovel . . .

HATCH: Gee haw?

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: So you kind of, do you consider yourself—I guess you kinda, you live in the country here.

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: Did you sell off some of the family's land? Or do you guys still have the three hundred acres?

PEAY: We may not have all of it, but most of it, pretty well.

HATCH: You still probably have most of it?

PEAY: Still in the family.

HATCH: Good, good.

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: You got family right around here?

PEAY: Do what?

HATCH: Do you have, who lives here? Who around here is family still?

PEAY: Well, on . . . from here down to the bottom of the hill, and back to the river . . . here to the river, back this way, back this way.

HATCH: Where's the river? Back there?

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: Is it pretty big back there?

PEAY: Stones River.

HATCH: But it's a pretty wide section of it?

PEAY: Oh, it's a long section, maybe a, I guess about a mile of it. A half a mile.

HATCH: Really? So I can walk down there to it?

PEAY: Well, straight [unintelligible word] down through there. Stones River.

HATCH: What did you, what did the river play, what part did the river play in your farming?

PEAY: Well, well, we just farmed and sometimes the river would get up over the bottomland, and course that deposited rich soil, but a lot of times, during the winter time, the river would come down and cover the farmland.

HATCH: Mhm. So that would help to replenish the soil?

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: It also washed it away, though, didn't it?

PEAY: Well, it was according to where you were.

HATCH: Yeah. Did you have any irrigation coming off of it?

PEAY: Irrigation?

HATCH: Mhm.

PEAY: No.

HATCH: No, you didn't need it?

PEAY: No, more or less didn't need it. Got plenty of water.

HATCH: How fast did that river run when it was raining pretty hard?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: Was that river pretty big when it rained hard? If a rain came?

PEAY: Oh, yeah—

HATCH: Did you get like, was it really fast, dangerous back there?

PEAY: It gets pretty up.

HATCH: Fast, I bet.

PEAY: Well, sometimes. I never seen it especially fast. It's just up, you know.

HATCH: Mhm. You gotta respect water.

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: It'll do some damage to you, you know.

PEAY: Yeah. That's true.

HATCH: [As Hatch snaps photos:] I'm taking a lot, huh? I'll bring you some back out.

PEAY: Okay. That's all right. You'll probably break your camera.

HATCH: Aww, no. That's if I do it like this, I'll break it. Everyone else I point it at it always seems to do just fine.

PEAY: Oh, yeah.

HATCH: What do you think that farming has taught you?

PEAY: Farming will cost you?

HATCH: What has it taught you? What did you learn from your life of farming?

PEAY: Well, it . . . It learnt you how to work, make a living, and you can more or less see the fruits of your endeavor. In other words, you can see what you're doing, accomplishing. Just like growing a crop, you know, you see it growing.

HATCH: So you had a sense of pride in that?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: Did you have a sense of pride in your work?

PEAY: No. [chuckling]

HATCH: No?

PEAY: I was kinda lazy. I really didn't know how to be a good a farmer.

HATCH: What about your, what about your life as an electrician and a plumber and a government contractor? What did that teach you?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: What did your life of being a government contractor and a plumber and an electrician, what did that teach you?

PEAY: Well, you learn a little bit of everything. You have to be pretty knowledgeable about most things.

HATCH: How about . . . Did you learn a lot about people?

PEAY: Yes, and well, you, you, you're in this government contract, and you have to do a lot of research to get prices and labor and working conditions and everything.

HATCH: Mhm.

PEAY: And come up with a cost estimate, and you're supposed to be pretty close.

HATCH: Yeah, you can't go over budget, right?

PEAY: To be an estimator. I worked as an estimator for the government on these million dollar projects.

HATCH: Did you do one around here?

PEAY: Redstone Arsenal.

HATCH: Redstone what?

PEAY: Redstone Arsenal, down in Alabama. Been down there to work.

HATCH: So you just go down there for periods of time?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: You just go down there for long periods of time and work?

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: They put you up?

PEAY: Do what?

HATCH: Do they put you up in a hotel or something?

PEAY: No. I'd go back and forth to my home here and might have a place down there.

HATCH: Did you really?

PEAY: Redstone Arsenal, Huntsville, Alabama.

HATCH: That's quite a drive.

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: You still own a place down in Huntsville?

PEAY: Huh?

HATCH: Do you still own a place down in Huntsville?

PEAY: Do what?

HATCH: Do you still own a house in Huntsville?

PEAY: No.

HATCH: Sold it?

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: Okay. Well . . .

PEAY: I never did own one. I rented one.

HATCH: Rented one?

PEAY: Yeah. See, I owned this home here, and come home generally on the weekends, something like that, when I got a chance. We stayed down there during the week.

HATCH: I understand. Do you think if they turned the Readyville Mill into a museum, do you think that would be a good, a good idea?

PEAY: It would, probably, would have possibilities. I think it would be a good idea.

HATCH: Do you think kids could learn from it?

PEAY: Pardon?

HATCH: Think kids could learn from it?

PEAY: Absolutely.

HATCH: And what would you want them to take away from that?

PEAY: Well, I think it's a way of life that's come and gone.

HATCH: Yes.

PEAY: They could find out how people lived back in the past.

HATCH: Do you think people would be surprised?

PEAY: Well, a lot of things, it would be.

HATCH: Have you told your stories to grandkids, so that they can remember them?

PEAY: Not as much as I should.

HATCH: Well, you know what? We're going to make them a copy of this and they're going to learn something from it.

PEAY: Yeah.

HATCH: Which will be pretty neat. How many copies do you need? How many would you like me to bring for you and your family?

PEAY: One.

HATCH: Just one? I might bring two.

PEAY: Okay.

HATCH: Could you look down again for a second?

PEAY: Pardon?

HATCH: Would you mind looking down again for a second? Looking down at that floor? Okay, look up. Just going to try something different there. I only got three left. I think that, I know that there are probably a lot of questions I haven't asked you that I needed to, but I do appreciate your time today.

PEAY: Yes, sir.

HATCH: It's been very good and very informative for me. I'll bring you some pictures back, and some copies of this, and maybe sign a release form, and I hope you've had a good time. I do appreciate your time.

PEAY: Yeah, I wanted to show you that old—

HATCH: Sure. This is Evan Hatch, signing off for this interview. Thank you very much. It's been a very good day.

PEAY: Let's go back there and I'll show you that old—

HATCH: Certainly. We appreciate it.

END OF INTERVIEW