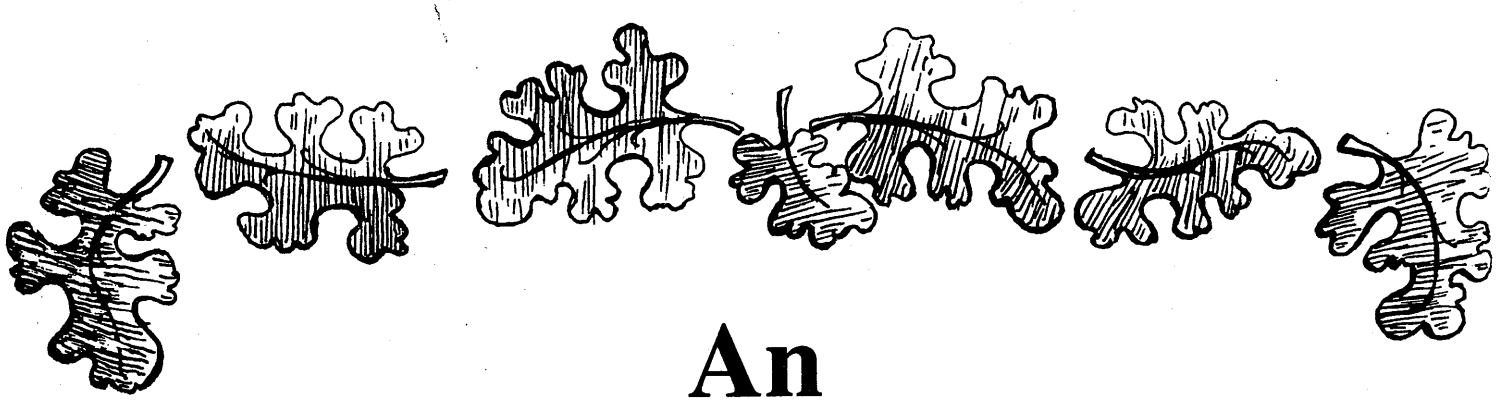
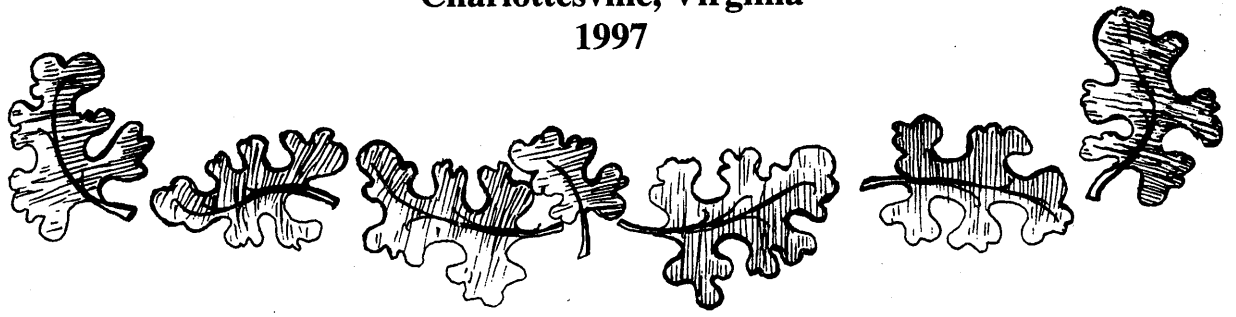


An Oral History of Konnarock Virginia

by
William B. Gable
and
Edward H. Davis

Published with a grant from the
Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and Public Policy
Charlottesville, Virginia
1997



ED DAVIS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank all the wonderful people of Konnarock who helped us with their time and support, especially those who agreed to be interviewed.

This project was made possible by a generous grant from the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and Public Policy, and by Emory & Henry College. Special thanks go to David Bearinger at VFAPP for his unending patience, and to Dixie Dawsey, for her excellent word processing and desktop publishing work. Monetary support was also given by the Konnarock, Green Cove, Laurel Valley Community Association and by an anonymous friend for additional costs of printing and mailing to all households in Konnarock, for which we are very grateful.

William Gable
Edward H. Davis
1997

* * * * * * * * * *

The Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and Public Policy was established in 1974 to develop and support public programs, education, and research in the humanities and to relate the humanities to public issues. The VFH promotes understanding and use of the humanities through public debate, group discussion, and individual inquiry. Principal activities of the Virginia Foundation include an internationally recognized Fellowship Program, a series of annual Initiatives and Special Projects, the Virginia Folklife Program, the Virginia Center for Media and Culture, a statewide network of Regional Councils, and the Grant Program. The VFH is non-profit and non-partisan and receives support from private gifts, grants and contributions, and from the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Commonwealth of Virginia. For more information, write or call the Foundation's office at 145 Ednam Drive, Charlottesville, VA 22903-4629; (804) 924-3296.

INTRODUCTION

Konnarock is a small unincorporated community high in the Blue Ridge Mountain province, hugging the north slope of Whitetop Mountain, on the border between Washington and Smyth counties in Southwest Virginia. It was founded in 1906 by the Hassinger Lumber Company as a company logging town and, despite the closing of the lumber operation in 1928, it survives today with about 300 residents, mostly the kin of original Hassinger employees. The post office and schools are closed and most original structures are gone, so that one can hardly detect the original company town by sight, but older residents have strong loyalties to the place that nourished them. Dozens who moved away have returned now, and their stories about how they "got by in this country" provide lessons for communities elsewhere about sustaining a healthy place through simple living and organizing for preservation.

In 1995 and 1996, lengthy interviews were recorded with 27 residents, most of whom were old enough to remember life in Konnarock before 1935. The biographical information about these interviewees is given in Chapter 1. The taped interviews were transcribed and then studied for patterns and finally arranged into chapters. Not all of the good material we gathered could fit in this book, because funds for printing were limited. We therefore apologize to any interviewee who feels an important statement or story was left out. The decisions were difficult, but the authors alone bear responsibility.

Some geographical and historical context here may make the specific story of Konnarock more digestible. Three national patterns are reflected in the town's founding at the turn of the century. First, industrial expansion was relatively rapid in that period, as large new furniture mills in North Carolina, new home construction throughout the South, and railroad and railroad car construction were all at or near record levels.[1] Railways were laid through the Ridge and Valley Province before the Civil War, running through Marion, Glade Spring (just ten miles from Konnarock as the crow flies), Abingdon, Bristol, and into the Valley of the Tennessee, but almost 50 years later much of Southern Appalachia was still being linked by rail.[2] This is not to say that the forests around Konnarock were undeveloped: Ashe and Alleghany counties just to the south and east were producing some $5,500 worth of ginseng per year in 1840 for export to China, all of it gathered by locals from the forests. Indeed, the forests around what would become Konnarock had been settled, although thinly, since the early 1800s.[3] There were clearings along various creeks. But Konnarock's founding paralleled a peak in eastern America's industrial revolution, and wood was still the leading ingredient.

Second, quality timber was at a premium, since logging firms had exhausted the best lumber resources of the northeastern states, including the western parts of Pennsylvania. The Hassinger family's large band saw mills were originally operating in several Pennsylvania camp towns, including Lamona, in Forest County. Since about 1870, the wide availability of smaller portable

saw mills had allowed the removal of much isolated eastern timber, and this further raised the value of virgin timber.[4] Although Gifford Pinchot, America's first professional forester, was promoting forest conservation as early as 1893, and the federal government created the Forest Service in 1905, the vast majority of logging operations were both wasteful and unsustainable.[5] Regeneration of a cut-over forest was not only left to nature, but so were great quantities of dry branches and limbs which often caught fire and burned thousands of acres of forest during summer and fall droughts. The Hassinger Company had a reputation for preventing severe forest fires, but this was the exception. Therefore lumber prices were quite high, making the large forests around Whitetop finally attractive to capital.[6]

Third, company towns were in their heyday in the southern United States, as firms relocating from the Northeast sought to isolate workers from union organizers and from competing employers who might raise the local wage average.[7] As the agricultural workforce was being replaced by machines, Southern farm residents were among the cheapest labor available. A paternalistic management style, including provision of cheap rental housing and local services, was successful in keeping most employees in a company town relatively satisfied.[8] The evidence we have suggests that the Hassingers ran Konnarock with a gentle hand, and as far as we can tell few questioned their wisdom in either town or forest management.[9]

With the rapid mobility of America's industrial capital, most company towns of that era were designed to boom and bust, and yet we found almost no resentment of the Hassinger Company for leaving in 1928. It is possible that the ones who are still in Konnarock are those with the least reason for resentment.[10] That may never be known. Most of the contents of this oral history describes life after the Company left and sold land and houses to numerous former employees. These residents stuck it out "in this country" by farming and working away from home. Over 70 years they have seen the forest grow back, mostly as part of the Jefferson National Forest.[11]

Death has taken most former Hassinger employees by now, but the ones remaining join their children, grandchildren, and others in forming a core of townspeople who prefer not to sell their land. They speak in these pages of an ideal Konnarock where two things are cherished: your neighbor and the forest. While they are not known for political organizing, many Konnarockians joined together in the 1970s to resist outside pressures for development of a ski resort. And the Konnarock Community Association is today a strong institution for maintaining the community. In effect, residents are now raising again the value of the forest in a way that was not imagined by their corporate founders one hundred years ago, by committing to their place for the long-term.

REFERENCES

[1]David N. Thomas, "Getting Started in High Point," *Journal of Forest History* 11 (July 1967), 23-32; Michael Williams, *Americans and Their Forests: A Historical Geography* (New York: Cambridge University, 1989), Chapter 10.

[2]Albert P. Brigham, *Geographic Influences in American History* (Boston: Ginn, 1903), 83-87.

[3]John S. Otto, "The Decline of Forest Farming in Southern Appalachia," *Journal of Forest History* 27, 1 (January 1983), 18-27; Michael Williams, "Products of the Forest: Mapping the Census of 1840," *Journal of Forest History* 24, 1 (January 1980), 4-23.

[4]John T. Morgan, *The Log House in East Tennessee* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1990), 110; Michael Williams, "Industrial Impacts on the Forests of the United States, 1860-1920," *Journal of Forest History* 31, 3 (July 1987), 108-121.

[5]Harold T. Pinkett, "Forestry Comes to America," *Agricultural History* 54, 1 (1980), 4-10.

[6]Luther C. Hassinger, "The Lumber Industry in Southwest Virginia," *History Society of Washington County, Virginia, Bulletin* Series I (Spring 1963), 5-16.

[7]David Mould, "The Company Town that Outlived the Company: Haydenville, Ohio," *Journal of Cultural Geography* 5, 2 (Spring/Summer 1985), 71-86.

[8]William D. Solecki, "Paternalism, Pollution and Protest in a Company Town," *Political Geography* 15, 1 (1996), 5-20.

[9]Robert Foster, "Konnarock: The Anatomy of a Company Town," *History Society of Washington County, Virginia, Bulletin* Series II, n. 30 (1993), 23-32.

[10]Oliver H. Heintzelman, "Longview, Washington—A Planned City," *Economic Geography* 34 (April 1958), 183-191.

[11]Harold A. Gibbard, "Extractive Industries and Forestry," in Thomas Ford, ed., *The Southern Appalachian Region: A Survey* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky, 1962), 115.

CHAPTER 1. BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

We present in this chapter basic biographical data on our 27 interviewees. Readers will note that in some cases such facts were more clearly available to recall than in others. We hope this information may be helpful to those doing genealogical work. One pattern worth noting is the strong links to North Carolina's northwestern region.

* * * * * *

Everett Adams
Born: January 12, 1922 down the road in Washington County, Virginia
Father's name: Ken Emmanuel Adams
Mother's maiden name: Betty Jane Pennington
Siblings: 7

Helena Hayes Adams
Born: 1927
Father's name: James Harvey Hayes
James was raised in Smyth County, up on Laurel Valley.
Mother's maiden name: Rosa Stamper.
Rosa was raised in Grayson County, Virginia
"[Mother] married a Hagy and he was driving a team of horses for Hassinger, and it come up a storm and blew a tree on him and killed him. Then she married my daddy."

Minerva "Nervie" Shumate Blevins
Born: May 28, 1917, Rugby, Grayson County, Virginia
Father: John "Daul" Shumate
Father's occupation: cut timber
Mother's maiden name: Cordelia Reedy
Mother's occupation: raised the kids
Nervie's siblings: 2 whole brothers and 2 half brothers and 2 sisters
Nervie's husband: Arden "Ard" Blevins
5 sons: Herb, Eddie, John, Jim, Joe
4 daughters: Thelma, Carol, Kay, Mary
Nervie's mother, Cordelia, died when she was 5. Her father, Daul, remarried. He married Laura Estridge, who also died. Daul then married a Johnson. The family moved to Fairwood when Nervie was 8 or 10 years old and her father cut wood there.

Robert Lee Combs
Born: April 2, 1916, Comers Creek, Fairwood, Grayson County, Virginia
Father: Eli Combs, born in Ashe County, North Carolina, 1876
Mother: Bertie Huffman, born in Grayson County, 1885
Siblings: three brothers and six sisters—names of siblings: oldest, Carrie; Jack; Dulcie; Leona; Nettie; Lee; Josie; and Manual.

"When my father and mother was first married, they lived here around 1900. ... Then they moved over to Comers Creek. He had some land over there that my grandfather had. Then [in 1919] we moved back over here to where we live now. I've been here about 75 years."

Blaine Eggers
Born: Ashe County, North Carolina, 1917
Moved to Damascus, Virginia, 1946, and served as pastor at churches around Konnarock

John Gable
Born: May 19, 1910, Superior, Wisconsin, at the far end of Great Lake Superior
Father: William Henry, minister, born in Numidia, Pennsylvania
Mother's maiden name: Emily Mae Harmon, born in Munsey, Pennsylvania
Both parents were born in Pennsylvania. "Father was born in Numidia and Mother in Munsey."
John came to Konnarock in 1936 and stayed there until 1939; then he was called to go to North Dakota. He returned to Konnarock in 1974 to retire.

Denton Pennington Gentry
Born: July 28, 1909, on top of Pine Mountain, Grayson County, Virginia
Father's name: Noah Pennington
"Father was born up at the Trivette place, on Whitetop Mountain [Washington County, Virginia]."
"Father worked for Fairwood Lumber Company, then Hassingers."
Mother's maiden name: Lalya Moran
"Mother was born in Rugby [Grayson County, Virginia]."
Siblings: "Zola Price and Eva Danish Trivett are my sisters. Elmer Pennington was my brother. [My other brothers are] Earl, Nathan, Ernest, Russell, and Paul. Paul lives with me here. There was a family of 10."
"When [my parents] got married, Dad was a foreman on a job up on Pine Mountain where she was working, so they lived up there after I was born."

Leroy "Roy" Hagy
Born: January 21, 1913, Azen, Washington County, Virginia
Father's name: Thomas Lewis ... "he went by his initials, T.L," born in Grayson County, Virginia.
Mother's name: Hester Pennington, born in Azen, Virginia.
Siblings: ". . . there were 11 of us. I'm the baby."

Thelma Blevins Harrington
Born: 1938, Konnarock, Washington County, Virginia
Father's name: Arden Ray Blevins, born in Aze, Washington County, Virginia
"Father was a coal miner and he used to do odd jobs. He coal mined mostly in Gary, West Virginia."
Mother's maiden name: Minerva Eleanor Shumate Blevins, born in Rugby, Grayson County, Virginia
"Mother was a farmer and a housewife."
Siblings: "Herb, who is older than I am; Eddie; John; James; Joe; Carol; Kay; and Mary—9 of us."

Alice Hayes
Maiden name: Alice Walls Hayes
Born: September 23, 1925
Mother's name: Cleo Henderson, born in North Carolina
Father's name: Major Walls, born in North Carolina

Jackson D. (JD) Hayes
Born: March 5, 1922
Father's name: Harley Hayes, born near Wilkesboro (Wilkes County, North Carolina)
Father's occupation: Worked for Hassinger
Mother's name: Rossie Hayes
Mother's occupation: "Mother gardened and helped farm."

Bernice Killen
Born: September 10, 1907, out near where they call Grassy Ridge in Washington County, in an old house.
Father's name: Wiley Henderson, born in Grayson County, Virginia
Mother's name: Sarah Trivette, born in Wilkes County, North Carolina

Hettie Henderson
Born: January 24, 1912
Father's name: Wiley Henderson, born in Grayson County, Virginia
Mother's name: Sarah Trivette, born in Wilkes County, North Carolina

Gladys Killen Millard
Born: July 20, 1928
Father's name: Felix S. Killen
Birthplace: Wilkes County, North Carolina, 1896
Occupation: U.S. Navy Vet and farmer
Mother's name: Bernice
Birthplace: Konnarock, Washington County, Virginia, 1907
Occupation: Homemaker and nursing home owner
Siblings: Delores and Cecil. In 1972 Cecil was killed in a car accident in Florida.

Cordelia McDaniel
Born: August 1902, 93 years ago, in the family house, in what was Old Azen, Washington County, Virginia
Father's name: "[My father's name] was Andrew and my husband's name was Andrew, too."
"My father was Andrew Williams and he was from Sparta, Alleghany County, North Carolina. My mother, Nancy Blevins, was a native of this country [Konnarock, Washington County, Virginia]. We always lived in Konnarock when we didn't live in the state of Washington.

Lloyd Aaron McDaniel
Born: August 24, 1925
Father's name: Andrew F. McDaniel; he came from Surry County, North Carolina
Mother's name: Cordelia Williams McDaniel

Mother was born in Azen, Washington County, Virginia. She moved to Washington and then returned at age 12.
Siblings: 3 girls and 4 boys

Carrington Wyatt Miller
Born: December 25, 1912, Ashe County, North Carolina
Father's name: George Wyatt
Birthplace: Ashe County, North Carolina
Occupation: Blacksmith and farmer
Mother's maiden name: Victoria Miller
Birthplace: Ashe County, North Carolina
Occupation: Housewife
Siblings: 7 brothers and one sister—James, Angus, Floyd, Hobson, Quincy, Howard, Blaine and Bertha

Madge Parsons
Born: 1923
Father's name: Brack Shumate
Mother's maiden name: Mae Riddle
Both parents came from across the mountain in Rugby, Grayson County, Virginia
Siblings: 4 brothers

Wardie Pennington
Born: 1914, Smyth County, Virginia
Father's name: Henry Pennington
Father's occupation: Worked as a farmer before employment with Hassinger Lumber Company; worked at Hassinger Lumber Co. from 1907-1928, duration of Company's existence in Konnarock; when Company departed, again worked as a farmer.
Mother's maiden name: Zoe Trivett
Mother's occupation: Homemaker
Parents' home: Ashe County, North Carolina
Siblings: 16

Fairy Roop
Born: 1906
Maiden name: Fairy Rebecca Trivett
Mother's name: Zora Alice Trivett, Wilkes County, North Carolina
Fairy's husband's name: Fred Roop
Fred was the brother of Fairy's half-sister's husband.

Mae Upchurch Shumate
Born: September 4, 1905, Grayson County, Virginia
Father's name: Arthur Riddle; Father was a carpenter who worked in West Virginia
Mother's maiden name: Emma Upchurch, Emma "took care of the kids."
Siblings: Mable Shepard and Artie Warren

Wilma Shumate
Born: December 23, 1940
Father's name: Hurtle Parsons, born in 1914
Mother's name: Madge Louise Shumate Parsons
Brother's name: Nick

Ella Mae Pennington Taylor
Born: March 23, 1920 in Smyth County, above Konnarock
Father's name: Will Huffman
Birthplace: "Father was born on the mountain at the Huffman home place [Smyth County, Virginia]."
Father's occupation: Worked in the mines of West Virginia
Mother's maiden name: Delsie Jane Pennington
Birthplace: "Mother was born in Pennington Town [Azen, Washington County, Virginia]."
Mother's occupation: Raised the kids
Siblings: 5 brothers and 3 sisters—"Edna was the oldest girl and I was the second. Mother and Dad had twins, a boy and a girl. They were younger than I was. Vivian was the baby girl. Edward was oldest, brother Bill was next, and brother June was next and brother Doc [his name was Ernest] was next, and then Jack."

Dora Testerman
Born: November 7, 1916, near Blowing Rock, Watauga County, North Carolina
Father's name: Peter Bentley
Father's occupation: Farmer - "We owned a little place off the mountain toward Lenoir."
Mother's maiden name: Etta Mae Jackson
Mother's occupation: Housewife
Siblings: "I had four brothers. I was the only girl."
"I came to the Training School when I was about 5 years old. My parents died and the Social Services brought me to the Training School. I was an orphan."

Elmer Lee Walls
Born: December 12, 1923, Azen Hill (Konnarock, Washington County, Virginia)
Father's name: Chester Lee Walls
Father's birthplace: Unknown
Father's occupation: Turn down man at the band saw building; continued working at old saw mills after operation
Mother's name: Nellie Blevins Walls
Mother was born in Konnarock, Washington County, Virginia
Mother's occupation: Taking care of the kids.
Siblings: Rob, Ern, Dean, Dwight, Russell Dean, Lucille, Madeline, Ora Mae

Miranda Jean Walls
Born: June 27, 1942 in Konnarock, Washington County, Virginia
Father's name: Joseph Hamilton Hayes, Jr., born in 1910

Father's birthplace: Azen, Washington County, Virginia
Father occupation: Worked for Hassinger, then the W.P.A., then Lincoln's in Damascus, then Brunswick in Marion.

Mother's maiden name: Zella Louise Shumate
Mother's birthplace: Konnarock, Washington County, Virginia
Mother's occupation: "She worked at John D. Lincoln's. That was her first job that I can even remember. I was about 9 at the time. My father worked there, too. After my twin sisters were born in 1952, my mother worked over here at the Medical Center cleaning the offices. She went up to Mrs. Meyer's and cleaned her house and helped her a couple of days per week. Then she cooked at the Konnarock Elementary School until it closed. She went to work as a cook in Damascus ... for about 10 years. She left there and went to work at Independence in the Garment Factory. Then she quit there and started the old Mr. Casual's in the old schoolhouse building in Troutdale. She was one that helped them get that started. Then she worked at Mr. Casuals for 10 to 15 years. She retired when she was 60. Then she went to work in Wytheville. She worked there until two years prior to her death."

Siblings: One brother, Bruce Hayes; BeBe Cole, Linda Hayes, and Brenda Blevins

Essie Elizabeth Shumate Wyatt

Born: November 8, 1912, Laureldale, Washington County, Virginia, just above Damascus, on the way to Konnarock

Father's name: Robert Shumate
Birthplace: North Carolina, on the borderline (Ashe County)

Mother's maiden name: Sarah Delania Bell Corum
Birthplace: Mountain City, Johnson County, Tennessee
Mother's occupation: Homemaker

"We lived in Damascus before we came to Konnarock. I was barely three-years-old when we moved. Dad worked at the Damascus Lumber Company. Then he heard about Hassinger going into the lumber business, cutting the trees in Konnarock. He went there and they hired him right away. He worked as a lumber piler. Dad also got one of our neighbors, Burt Jones, a job there. When Dad got a job with Hassinger, he bought a house in Konnarock."

Siblings: 2 brothers and 2 sisters

CHAPTER 2. HASSINGER LUMBER CO.

In 1906, when the Hassinger brothers moved from Forest County, Pennsylvania, and set up their operation, they brought about 25 loggers and their families; but, the mill would employ more than ten times that number when running at full capacity. Therefore, many people from Southwest Virginia and Northwestern North Carolina moved with their families to the new town of Konnarock. Most either had logging experience before that or came from general farming backgrounds. The town consisted of the large mill, a mill pond, an office building, barns, houses that the workers rented, a Company store (called the commissary) with post office and a community building. There was the railroad running logs and passengers to Damascus, Abingdon, and Wilkesboro, and there were dirt roads to those places and to Marion. There were many garden plots and pastures for cattle, sheep, and horses. There were no churches, as the Hassingers did not allow them. Instead, the Company sponsored weekly non-denominational services with traveling preachers in the community building. The Company is remembered today mostly for its support of education for the workers' children and its charity towards community members in need. The Company is also remembered for leaving: because the valuable timber had all been cut, the lumber mill shut down on December 24th, 1928. The Hassingers then opened a lumber retail store in Bristol, Tennessee, and sold the Konnarock land and buildings, some to the government and much of it to various former employees who could afford it. Other corporate landowners like the Douglas Land Company also sold land around Konnarock once it was logged over.

* * * * * * * * * *

Lloyd - My father came from Surry County, North Carolina. When he was 12 years old, he started working at the Hassinger Lumber Company piling lumber. Later, he became a Provost Marshall. There were a lot of Company houses which were constructed; however, they were not too good. The Company moved in 1928 or 1929.

That was good grazing land up there. We could raise sheep and everything. Now the main farm land around here belonged to the Lossners and then they left. The Waters got the most of it.

They didn't do much farming after they got it; it just laid there. It was real good farm land when Hassingers owned it. Lossners farmed it when they was here. After they left, all the farm land wound up, just about, going into Waters' reserve and the farmers just about quit because there was no land fit to farm.

Well, Hassingers cleared out the big timber. The small timber they wouldn't even fool with. After they moved out, the small timber growed up in rough places—hard to get out—you had steep slopes. You used horses. They just set up little bitty sawmills.

Dora - They were down there behind the Waters' store. They brought the logs off the mountain and dumped them in there to wash them off before they sawed them. They kept the bark. That's how the Training School was built. They skinned them and, of course, covered the Training School. We would go down there every day or so and watch them load the logs. Miss Smith took us down there from the Training School as a group to watch.

Ella Mae - The only thing I can remember about the Hassinger Lumber Co. was when the logs were put in Mill Pond, and then the Company men would fish the logs out.

Bernice - We would have ice cream suppers and other activities in the pavilion. The lumber company sponsored the activities. The company also built a store which was operated by Mr. Barnes for many years. Mr. Barnes left after the store burned, and then the Creggers came.

Roy - When the job was running, this hollow used to be full of houses, all Hassinger built. Our house was not Hassinger built; it was on Dad's land. At one time Dad owned all this through here back to the church. He kept a lot of cattle and sheep and horses. Dad worked for Hassinger all the time and the kids farmed. We usually kept two teams of horses. We raised wheat, oats, rye, everything like that. What we didn't use we sold; but, we used most of the crops ourselves.

People thought well of Mr. Hassinger. If you had kids and the man died, Mr. Hassinger seen they got school. Some of them made lawyers and some doctors.

We used to have a theater there. When the movie would be over, there would be boys and girls thick down there talking.

Hassinger ran it?

Roy - Yes. He had a big Company store—the best clothes and the best eats. They kept everything with good prices.

Denton - When Dad had a logging job, we were always there. We didn't get out where they cut timber. We watched them haul the logs in. We usually had 9-13 teams of horses and watched that. We didn't go into the mountains where they were cutting.

I worked for the Hassingers—house cleaning, cooking—when I was about 15 years old. I would work for them about 6 or 7 weeks at one time. They were fine people. You wouldn't know they were rich. They paid me well. I got three or four dollars a week. That's all a girl would get. Women didn't make more than 4 or 5 dollars per week.

Hassinger was trying to teach them to grow their own food. That's what Mr. Hassinger wanted. He was quite a man. Hassingers looked after the people. They were not selfish at all.

We had a movie once a week in the big building in the holler where the church was. They didn't call it a church; it was an Assembly Hall. If people didn't have the money for the movie, the [Chatauqua] tickets could be put on their store account. They took care of it that way. Lots of people owed thousands of dollars. When they went out of business, they lost some money.

So, Hassingers didn't foreclose or make them pay on the store bill before they left?

Denton - No. There was no work for women in Konnarock. Hassingers hired two women, one in the store and one in the office. That's all the women they ever hired. If he could, he kept a man in the office. They liked men in the office.

Do you remember anybody talking about the Hassinger Company, how maybe if they had managed the timber better they would have had more timber instead of running out like they did?

Fairy - No; but, I have thought about that myself. Most people who sold their timberland to the Hassingers bought it back. They wanted it cleared so they could have grass crops and corn crops.

Wardie - Most people thought that Mr. Hassinger took good care of the town. I had a number of aunts and uncles who lived around Konnarock who worked for Hassinger.

When you were a little boy, was your father working just on the farm or was he working over there for Hassinger?

Everett - No, he worked for Hassinger.

What did he do over there?

Everett - He was a teamster. He done quite a bit of things. He was happy working there. I can still remember the mill, and I can remember the trains running up and down these tracks. I can remember the little tracks, too; they went up that road where you go up to Bill [Gable's]. We lived up there a while. There are still signs of the tracks.

How do you feel the Hassinger Company affected your life as a child?

Carrington - Well, I think they did great things for us. They had a couple of stores. One of my brothers was employed there a while. He was a butcher.

Oh, was that a good thing for the community?

Carrington - The store was a lot like a department store, the Company store. It contained most anything you wanted. The store had a meat market and everything. It was more like a department store—clothing, tools, axes, and things.

What would happen if a fire broke out?

Carrington - All of the neighbors and everybody would try to help. And you know, the sawmill used to be down there, part of it anyway. I had forgotten about that Tom Joneses. Up on that hill, they had a big reservoir of water. The Company did up here. And, they had water in houses. And they had a reservoir way back up there, the Company did. It was piped to all the houses, and they used that to fight the fires. People would have to carry water.

We had electricity for lights from, I guess, you call it a Dynamo. They turned it off about 11:00 at night, and they would be back on in the morning for the whole Company.

It was several houses that belonged to the Company all through here. You'd be surprised. I don't know how many, but it seemed like a whole lot to me, I guess. Well, it was.

Did your family own their house, or was it built by the Hassingers and then rented?

Carrington - They just rented from the Company. All of them.

I remember when Mrs. Hassinger came down to see the last log sawed. We moved to West Virginia in the spring of '29 because my father was working there. We lived there 3 years. Then the Depression came and we came back and lived in that house where my nephew lives.

Mr. Hassinger was one of the great leaders. He tried to keep all of his men down back then. He was a great leader, I thought. And people getting an education. He was good to the kids and all too, seemed to have good respect for everybody.

Mr. Hassinger had ministers from different places preach Sunday service, and they usually stayed with the Hassingers. I remember, Mr. Balentine, I believe was his name. I don't know what denomination he was, but I remember he come over to the school on Monday morning to conduct a service. I think he was from Bristol. I don't know if he was Lutheran or not. He had a real good singing voice.

What do you remember of the lumber business?

Cordelia - I seen thousands of trees cut down. We were about the first ones to move here. There were just stumps. We purchased our land from the Douglas Land Co. Old man Umbarger lived up there and was an agent for the land company. After we bought, the Hagy's bought and people started buying up there.

John - The first thing we saw when we came in 1934 was stumps everywhere. They had cut down every big tree that was worth anything. I have motion pictures even of hillsides just covered with nothing but stumps. Now it is all overgrown. That's why we are back here. Then, of course, the people were very poor because they had no regular employment and they had to get along. The Girls' School had come in with nursing facilities and had established Mothers' Clubs to raise money so they could bring in a doctor about once a month to have sort of a clinic to take care of the worst cases. It was 30 miles to a hospital, and 20 miles for most people. They would go to the hospital in Marion or Abingdon.

When you came in '34, what did the people say about the Hassinger Co.?

John - I don't think people blamed Hassinger for leaving, because he was a real prince of a man, a very fine person. They just saw it as something happening. It had to happen because the trees were gone, and they moved the whole crew, machinery out into Northwestern Pennsylvania and worked there in the same way for a while.

The men, as I understand it, were well paid, and they wore dress suits and worked hard at the mill. It was a big mill. They had a big mill pond where they brought in the logs. It was all gone by the time I got here. They even moved the little trains that went up into hollows. There was a train that went by our place down here up into the woods. Some of the tracks were pulled up. The main track to Abingdon was here, and there was a train, I think once a week, and finally they took that up and now it's a walking trail.

Way back when they first started here in 1906, Mr. Hassinger actually said to a reporter that he was not going to cut down all the trees, that he was just going to select cut, but that went by the boards fairly quick. He didn't select cut. He didn't leave one big tree. There were some in inaccessible parts.

I am not aware of people feeling that if Hassinger had managed the lumber he could have continued with his operation. You can look back on it now and see that he should have taken only the mature trees. Right about that time came the chestnut blight. That occurred before I came. There were still some chestnut trees standing, but most of them had been cut down. They had to cut them down. They were dying. That was the main work of the sawmill at that time. Their biggest work

at that time at the sawmill was to cut the chestnut trees and cut them into lumber. They built the fire hall over at Helton of chestnut lumber. All the walls inside were chestnut panels. They called it Hassinger Hall.

So, it must have been interesting in '36 to see the successes of Hassinger—all the buildings that they had contributed.

John - They had a Company store that had closed. Everything was closed but it was still standing, the hotel and the buildings.

You were able to use a lot of those facilities?

John - We used the chapel. We lived in one of the houses that was built, I'm sure, for a lumberman at that time. It was bought by the church or given to the church, probably as a parsonage.

Was there any talk about maybe if they had done things different, they might have still had lumber?

Roy - I guess, but it lasted longer because there weren't any chain saws in those days. They had some big horses to log with then. If you were logging out at Green Cove, you would load the horses in boxcars and haul them out there and back.

J.D. - There's still yet a little virgin timber up there, but it's down in hollers like that which they can get them out now better than they could then.

When you got this land over here in Konnarock, where did you get it from?

Mae S. - Douglas Land Company. We only got 30 some acres. It didn't cost nothing much, $400. It was cheap at the time. I guess they wanted to get rid of it. There was so much of it. Everybody hated later that they didn't buy more of it.

Robert - The only thing I can see is that Hassinger came in here, wages were low, people worked for him, he got everything, they worked out for groceries and stuff, he stripped this country, and then he moved out and left the people fall. He never left anything here to go on.

Blaine - Hassingers were well-respected and good people. They offered lots of employment and took good care of the place.

When they closed, they had been running for 21 years, and they cut all the good timber out. Did you hear complaints of how they cut it all out?

Blaine - No, but by today's standards they were more wasteful back then.

How important was the Hassinger Lumber Company to people's lives?

Nervie - It was about what everybody did. Most of the time Daul cut timber for people that wanted it.

So the Hassingers weren't the only show in town?

Nervie - No. I just remember, you know, that the commissary used to set down here where it use to be a pool. It was the big store, the Company store they called it. We use to have to come down off of the laurel down here to the post office ... walk that far. But, I didn't go every day. One or two would go and get the mail for two or three families. Lee Waters, our mail carrier brought it from Creek Junction. We enjoyed getting out and walking.

Ella Mae - My father would go off for spells and come back home. He did work first down here at the big Hassinger saw mill. But, that went out you see. They moved out and that left no jobs in Konnarock so he had to go off and work.

How often would he come home?

Ella Mae - About every 5 to 6 weeks. He was a bootlegger. He made whiskey and sold it. He was doing that when he accepted the Sabbath. You know down here where Celia Jane Hagy lived—that house, that is down here now. My daddy was painting that and she was out there with a Bible every day talking to Dad about joining the church and doing better. My daddy drank and smoked. He dipped and courted the women. Then he accepted the Sabbath and he quit every bit of that. We had a big old hog in the pen and he butchered that hog and sold it on the pole, as they call it. He and Uncle General Trivett had the still together. My daddy begged Uncle Leonard to do away with it, to sell it. He told him, "We're either going to be locked up for life or we're going to be killed." So, my daddy gave his part up and he wouldn't have anything else to do with it. Uncle Leonard told Dad that he was going to finish running this one off and he wasn't going to do no more. Garland Patten was the Sheriff here in Konnarock at that time. Well, Uncle Leonard had went up to the still that morning and you know he had done what he had supposed to have done and then he had started to leave to go home. Well, Garland Patten deputized Andrew McDaniel to be a sheriff too. They went up to where the still was at and Uncle Gentle run over toward where my grandmother Pennington live and he was going from the still. They tried to get him to halt, but they said that he didn't and they shot him in the back and killed him. I remember coming home from Konnarock school and somebody had went up on the mountain and picked General up on a horse.

I don't know how many children he had, but he had a house full of children when he was killed. Now, Ethel lives down here on the hill. That was her father; and after she got grown, Andrew McDaniel always said he killed Uncle General. So she wanted to know which one done it and she called ... see, Garland Patten lived in Abingdon ... She called him and asked him which bullet killed him, whether it was his bullet or Andrew's. But Andrew always bragged that he killed a man and he wouldn't care to kill another one.

Did you know a woman named Nina Yearick?

Fairy - Yes. We were about the same age. Well, we had a big orchard and we'd sell them apples and cherries and beans out of the garden, and cucumbers and things like that. I went to their house several times just to take her something to sell. Maybe I would play with her a little.

Were they a well-to-do family?

Fairy - Yes, they would come to our house during the summer. They come to picnic—Mrs. Hassinger, Mrs. Harrier and Mrs. Olson or Mrs. Yearick. I don't think Mrs. Barnes ever came or Mrs. Magnesson. The Magnesson girls did though. I knew a lot of people lived up in Konnarock that went back to Pennsylvania when they first went back.

CHAPTER 3. HOME & HEALTH

The daily life for people in early Konnarock was home-oriented. Many of the interviewees had stories to tell about the chores they did as children, about caring for home and family, and about the births, deaths, sickness, and health that marked time in their households. Most families found ways to make some cash by selling garden produce or herbs collected in the forests, fields and roadsides, or by providing services to other families. Cash was scarce and much activity was therefore done in barter. But the diverse ways of making money demonstrate that people were not just passive Hassinger employees. In building a company town, the Hassingers provided fertile ground for a creative and complex rural economy that served more than 500 residents. When the company closed down, the shocks were strong but the people who could stay already knew many ways to get by. Sometimes the government helped families in need, and sometimes family members supported their kin in Konnarock by working away from home. But despite the company closing, the Great Depression and the isolation, Konnarock was held together by a love of home.

* * * * * * * * * *

Tell about home life when you were young.

Jean - We lived with my Uncle Bob, across from the parsonage as you go up Mae Water's hill, the house in the bottom that Blevins owns now. We lived there as far back as I can remember. We used to live down there on Rt. 58 right up from the stop sign, at the junction of Rt. 58 and Rt. 603.

I went as a day student to the Konnarock Training School. We rode with Tom Blevins up there on the hill. He worked for the school, so he had the school's van. In order for me to go as a day student, my mother had to pay a tuition, about $12 a month. It was a lot of money then. My brother stayed over at the Boys' School for a round or two. He just wanted too.

When I was a teenager, I helped my mother clean the Medical Center. I also helped some in the lunchroom after she had surgery. She paid me some money for my assistance. Every summer my aunt in Bristol had a baby. I went down from the time school was out till school started again. I kept all her children and did all of her work. I got paid $10 per week. That was enough to buy me all my new school clothes. I did that from the time I was 12. My mother had two sisters that lived in Bristol. They would bring me up on Sundays sometimes, and I would catch the bus in Bristol at Bollings Market and come to Damascus. Mom would have someone pick me up on Friday afternoon. They would generally come and get me on Sunday. Mom was a telephone operator. So, I raised parcels of kids. I was 10 when the twins were born—my twin sisters. So my sister and I got stuck with all the babysitting. In the afternoons we wanted to go swimming or something, but it was hard. I always had a job because my mother worked. It was my responsibility to come in and get supper and straighten up the house. I had to dust, mop the house, and do all that stuff, and then get supper. My sister had to wash the dishes, which she generally wiggled out of every night. Bruce was supposed to carry in the wood, and I generally got stuck with that job. We had cows to milk.

You visited the sick?

Dora - Yes, I was about 14 when I visited the sick. I would go with Miss Twedten, our nurse, and she would doctor people at Whitetop and Helton. She took me with her usually all the time. Of course, I wasn't afraid. She was a good nurse. She would go to Fairwood. People would carry food to those who didn't have jobs. One of the people who would bring food was Ward from Marion. It was his job through welfare. We had stamp books. They issued us all a stamp book. One pound of coffee would have to do you a month, so many pounds of flour and so many pounds of meal. I think it was 25 pounds each, and that had to do you a month. Some people had a lot more children than we did. Each family got the same amount. You had to go to Marion at a place on this end of town where the Social Services are now and take your stamp book and they would tear your stamps out and give you your groceries from Marion. We didn't have any vehicles. Les Frances usually hauled Arde. He would haul other people's stuff. That had to last a month. Another man, Edgar Umbarger, he would hire men to work on the farm. He had a little store just for his men on the farm, and he would let them get their food out of there. He kept time on them and how much they worked out he would give them groceries. If they wanted it that way, or if they needed money, he would give them money.

How many farmers were in a position to hire somebody to do things?

Dora - Edgar Umbarger was the only one I knew of.

Was there anybody who was the hardest hit by the Depression?

Dora - Baltizaar family. A lot of people would share their stuff with them. The family received welfare food. But, there were several children in the family, and people would share with them. Mr. Baltizaar used to come here and eat with me and my husband. There were so many of them, and he had kinfolk that would come in on him from across the mountain. They would eat his stuff up faster. He would come and want to go hunting with Arde. They would coon hunt and then eat dinner. People would give his family milk and eggs. Most people had a milk cow and chickens, and we would share the eggs and milk with them.

Ella Mae - When I was young, we had to help father. We helped him after we got large enough—big enough to use a pitchfork. We didn't have hay bailers then. We stacked the hay. We would load it up on a sled like and haul it to a level place and make haystacks. And they'd throw it up to us and we'd pack it around and tromp it down.

What was the most difficult thing about being a mother here, and a wife years ago?

Mae S. - Keepin' the young'uns straight, I guess. I use to have to get a little wood. Use to, we didn't have anything but wood to burn. Me and the neighbor that use to live up here in the house—it's gone now. We would go up in the woods and cut down the locust trees and drag them down here and cut them up and divide the block. Well, I use to love doing stuff like that. She really helped me.

Would you get the entire winter supply?

Mae S. - No, enough to make out until Brack would come home.

How would you get groceries from the store?

Mae S. - Carry them. We never would go buy big loads like you do now. Couldn't carry them. It was hard sometimes back then. We didn't have like other people; but, we had enough. And I thank God for it. He never let us go hungry. We never froze to death. We usually kept a girl there. Hired to help while Brack was gone. She was a close neighbor. We would give her a dollar and a half a week. She stayed with me the whole time he was gone. He would come home for a week or for a weekend, and she would go home and stay.

How did she have so much time to give to that?

Mae S. - Well, back then you didn't have much to do. They was glad to get out and get a dollar and a half. I had several different ones, up in their teens. And, I used to work. I don't know if you know anything about ... they use to cut down old oak trees and take the bark off it and sell it. I would carry that for 25 cents a day—out to the road where they would get to it with a horse. Then I hoed corn for a dollar a day. I was 12 or 13 years old back then. I thought I was getting rich getting 25 cents a day.

What bark were you peeling?

Mae S. - I believe it was Chestnut oak bark. They had called it tan bark. They hauled it to Troutdale and picked it up on a train. Once the bark was peeled the timber would be moved to Troutdale. The first time I ever went to Troutdale, I went over there with my uncle on a wagon that mules pulled. It was a wagon with a front seat, and they had big racks on the back and put bark on that.

What did you think of Troutdale?

Mae S. - I don't even remember. ... A woman asked me where I got my pretty dress. I remember that. And I knew the woman. Her name was Martha Mabe. She was old then, and I said that Mommy made it for me. It was calico. A red skirt and a white blouse.

Fairy - [The first funeral I remember was when I was young—a little girl about my age. She looked so pretty. I suppose she was 6 or 7 years old.]

When you had your children, was there a midwife to do that?

Fairy - Yes. Nancy Jane Hagy. She came probably three miles. A lot of babies died at birth.

When you were pregnant and then your time came, did somebody just have to run three miles to get her?

Fairy - Well, usually she went and stayed at the house when she knew the baby was due. I had a doctor, Dr. Shuller, with my first one. He's the one that the Hassinger Company brought in. I believe he was German. Everybody liked him.

How many children did you have?

Fairy - Nine. All of them lived. The same midwife delivered all of our children. We always lived with my grandmother, and she knew all about herbs. She had a little herb garden, and every time anyone would get sick around the country they'd send for her to come. She doctored them with herbs. The flu killed people back then. There were lots of houses where there were two dead at a time. Lizzy Heuser's daughter and her husband died. They were both dead in the house at the same time. They didn't take people to the funeral home because they had no way to get out from up there. They'd take them to church to bury them.

Did your husband get any kind of pension from working for the federal government?

Fairy - No, I got a hundred dollars from them when he died for the funeral.

Did your sister and her husband have a wedding, or did they just elope?

Fairy - They had a wedding out in the woods. Everybody went to Tennessee to get married because they could get their marriage license much cheaper in Tennessee than they could in Virginia. I've walked with several couples to Tennessee to get married. We would take our own preacher from Virginia. The wedding would be held just barely over the state line.

Did you get married in Tennessee?

Fairy - Yes, I got married in Tennessee. We went on a lever car. There was a big snow on and it was cold, oooooh. It was the 28th of February 1924.

So you all rode, just the two of you, or did you get the preacher on the lever car?

Fairy - Oh, we had the preacher and my husband's brother and his wife for a witness, and the man that operated the lever car. We had army blankets and army overcoats and everything warm we could find around us.

What else did you do when you were young?

Fairy - I read a lot. Well, we lived, like I told you, with my grandmother. She had fainting spells, and I usually had to stay with her while my mother was out gardening or fixing fence or doing something. If something happened, I always knew where my mother was. I could run after her.

And then when you were 14 and your mother died, from then on you were pretty busy.

Fairy - Well, I stayed with my sister. Of course she didn't want me; but, she had no other choice. She had to keep me. And then later, they would have loved to have kept me. When I got married, they didn't want me to leave then. They had two babies then.

They wanted you to babysit?

Fairy - Yes. I was so glad to get out. I didn't go back until I went to get my clothes.

What was life like in your home?

Wardie - I had polio when I was 3 and 4 years old. We would use blackberries to make jelly. The blackberries were also used for stomach problems—the juice was removed and taken as medicine.

When you got married, you all moved in with your family?

Wardie - Yes, we had our own room.

How long did you live like that? Did you have children pretty soon after you were married?

Wardie - About a year after we married, we had five children. They all grew up, but one got killed. Somebody shot him.

How many acres did you have on the farm in Konnarock?

Wardie - We had 58 acres.

When did electricity come in, do you remember?

Wardie - About 1932. We grew up without electricity.

You didn't feel you were bad off for not having electricity?

Wardie - Oh, no—not a bit. We had oil and gas lamps.

Did your family keep to itself?

Wardie - We mostly kept to ourselves. Our farm was isolated. It was a long walk in to town.

Did you go to work or did you just stay at home and work around the house?

Madge - I stayed at home and washed dishes.

Did you farm any?

Madge - Yes, we had 32 acres. We kept cows, pigs, horses to plow with and things like that.

Did you ever gather herbs or berries along the road?

Madge - Just blackberries to eat.

Did your mother have a garden?

Madge - Mother had a big garden. I washed dishes, lots of them—with that many boys. I used to heat the water on the stove, and I would pour it out so I could wait a little longer and heat more.

Wilma - I can tell you someone who was a big asset to this community was Dr. Meyer. I helped take care of Mrs. Meyer when I came back here. A friend of mine was taking care of her so I would go up occasionally and take care of her. She could speak English, but there on the end she forgot her English and she would talk German. When we went down there, she would make these great big cookies and she would give you one. One time she gave me this rag doll and it had two dresses.

Carrington - When I was a little girl, I played with dolls. I didn't work outside. I worked in the house and helped my mother out—washed dishes and things like that.

Were there a lot of neighbor girls close by?

Carrington - Yes, I had some very good girl friends. My parents would let me go visit my friends and spend the night with them.

Lloyd - The first thing I did, when I got home from school, was to take a load of wood to heat the house and the cookstove. We had a fireplace and a big wood heater. That was my job; it was natural. We had to carry water, too. We did not have any running water. We had a place outside called the wash house to wash our clothes and take a bath. I'd take a bath about twice a week, but you wash good every day. That whole place is about as big as this room. We were better off. We were healthy.

Did the nurses help families quite a bit?

Cordelia - Yes. Old lady Twedten saw people who were sick around here. She would get used clothes and sell them. Everybody liked Ms. Twedten. She was a Jewish nurse. The Training School got clothing that could be sold cheap and furnished education for youngsters. The training was a big help to this country. There were some mighty nice teachers up there too. They stayed up at my house a whole lot. When my babies were little, they would come up there. When Andrew would come home he would tell his events of the day.

Bernice - I remember when my first cousin and I were pulling Buck Vine or Skull Vine. We sat down and had us a biscuit or two. (I was just a little bitty girl, about 4 or 5.) When she got through, she said, "When I get through eating, I always take me a little dip of snuff." She said, "Don't you want some snuff?" And, I said, "Oh, yes." She put me a little dip under my lip and she had to carry me home. I was never as sick in my life.

I ran a fever from it. It made me sick all over. She had to leave her Buck Vine setting out there to carry me home.

Did you and your husband get together at Azen Church?

Bernice - Yes. Most of the kids in the country took a walk on Sunday afternoon ... down to Creek Junction.

When you went walking down there, did your parents feel you needed a chaperone?

Bernice - No, there wasn't enough things that went on then that they felt like it. There was always a group of us.

What about when it got dark, were you required to be home?

Bernice - Yes, unless we went to church.

Did you have physicians in the area?

Bernice - We had three doctors here before Dr. Meyer came. They were Company doctors. One was Dr. Stonesifer, and he died with the flu when the first influenza came along. Dr. Shuler and Dr. Boatwright were the other doctors.

Were there some flu epidemics that hit this community hard?

Bernice - Yes, the flu hit this community very hard. I was a little girl. I went down to my sister's to stay for a little while, and there was a family living close to us that had some children. While I was out there, the flu broke out. I never did have it but all the rest of the family did. When I came back to my father's, this family that lived close to us, two of them had died—a girl about my age. My family never knew how hard that hit me, to come back and find two of my playmates dead.

Roy - When they came back from WWI and they brought the flu in, a lot of people died from it.

After Hassinger closed out, then Dr. Meyer came here. They lived down there where they are putting the fire hall up. Dr. Meyer was a good doctor. Everybody liked him. He was from Germany. I think he might have been in a concentration camp, maybe. His wife came here first and then he came later.

Can you think of any other stories about the people back then that were important to you?

Bernice - I can tell you about the only spanking my dad every gave me. We had an old mule and he wanted to break him. He wanted me to ride the horse and help him, and I wouldn't do it. He said, "Yes, you will." And he got a switch and he wore me out and I got up on that horse and I would drive that old mule. I'd plow when they were laying off ground. I would guide him. That was the only time I said "no" to my father.

What about other things that people would have done to stick together before electricity and phones?

Hettie - If there was an illness, people wouldn't go to the hospital. Someone would come in and sit up with that sick person— just people in the community, men and women. They would visit the sick. Now we have a senior citizen center here in Damascus that a lot of people here belong to. The van will come around on Wednesday and pick up anybody who wants to go. They take them by the grocery store and ... the drugstore and get prescriptions refilled. It's called the Damascus Senior citizens.

Gladys - Bernice had a homemade doll and it needed some hair. She and her sister took a butcher knife, and they were going to cut off a cow's tail to make hair for the doll. The cow kicked and Mother has a scar on her arm.

That cow could have killed you!

Bernice - I know.

Gladys - They had a sister, Annabelle Blevins, who passed away when she was 96, and at one time she was the only licensed midwife in the state of Virginia.

Bernice - If people didn't have money, they might give her a chicken. She would go all the way into Fairwood. They would send word that they would want her to come and deliver so she would wait to hear from them. It might be in the middle of the night, but it didn't bother her.

Gladys - A lot of times they wouldn't pay her, and then when the woman would get pregnant again they would come and give her a dollar so she would be ready to deliver the next one.

You were delivered by your aunts?

Hettie - My father's sisters.

Gladys - My brother and I were born at home, but a Company doctor delivered me. My brother was delivered by a couple of midwives. They were self taught. One was Nancy Jane Hagy.

I can remember when I was a kid. Dr. Clendenen would come up here and deliver babies and sometimes he would send for my aunt to come and help him.

Blaine - This nurse that I mentioned was a midwife—Sister Sophie. She was a very good person. There was no controversy over the Lutheran and the Baptist; she helped us all.

Thelma - Beulah Shumate, in Konnarock, delivered my mother when I was born.

Did you do work around the farm?

Thelma - In the home, being the oldest daughter in a family of 9, I had a lot of jobs: baby-sitting and cooking, cleaning, laundry. We used to have to carry a lot of water from the spring before water was piped to the house. That was our job. The boys usually cut the wood and did the farming when Dad was in West Virginia working. Mom and the boys did the farming.

Did you work at the neighbors for any money?

Thelma - Most of the neighbors was too poor. They had enough children to do their own chores. I never really actually earned anything until, I guess, I was past 18. What money we had, our parents gave us. At one time Mom churned and sold butter, and that went to Sturgill's Store.

My uncle came home from WWII, bringing a history book. The history book I liked because, up to that point, let's see how old would I have been when he came home, maybe 6, I hadn't started school, but the only two books in the house was the Bible and the Sear's catalog.

They used to sit up with the terminally ill, stay up all night long. Now that I'm working at the Nursing Service, I'm wondering if that was a good idea. It might have hastened their death. I need some rest. There's a lot of people that likes company. But when I get sick, I'm like a wild animal. I want to crawl off somewhere, like to bed.

And I don't want anyone bothering me. I don't want to entertain anyone. That's a burden to feel like you have to entertain someone when you're sick. So, you just remember that when I get down with some terminal disease. Don't offer to sit up with me.

Dr. Meyer came when I was 2 years old, in 1940. ... I was the first member of my family to see Dr. Meyer. Mom said I was crazy back then. She said I'd run extremely high fevers and she'd bring me down to Dr. Meyer and he'd say, "Well, I can't find anything wrong with her. Let's see how she is by morning." And by morning, it'd be gone.

Denton - When they were logging, there were camps everywhere. Now Dad/we lived on the head of the Laurel, and the train ran away, loaded with logs, and wrecked on our house. It tore everything we had out. Everybody was out of the house at the time.

The kitchen was separate from the house where we lived. They had a lobby over across the railroad on the bank where all the workhands stayed. I think we had about 20 some boarders, and my oldest brother and I were over on that side. My mother was washing in front of the house. She got a few burns from the loader that turned over when it threw hot water on her arm. It could have burned her up. She was lucky. Nobody got hurt. (My mother did all of our sewing, and she made quilts and embroidered.)

We had a doctor there when the flu epidemic first broke out, and he was the first one to die, our doctor. Then we got Dr. Schuller. He must have stayed 20 years. Then we got Dr. Boatwright.

My dad made a lot of money. We shared with the people. Mom gave milk, butter, eggs and things like that to needy people. Dad always helped. Well, we all did. We were taught that you help your fellow man. When people need, we give.

Did you ever go to someone else's house in the community to take care of them or to do work for them?

Denton - Oh, yes, all the time.

Paid or unpaid?

Denton - Oh, I was paid. I did the cooking, washing, ironing, housecleaning, taking care of everything. When women had babies, I took care of them. I stayed all the time, usually for two weeks after a birth. I never worked after I was married. I worked like a dog, but at home. We farmed. My husband worked on a job and the children and I farmed all the time. ... I had an awful good bunch of workers and they still are.

Lots of people want to buy here. We could sell any day. They want to buy all of the land; but, it's not for sale. It goes to the boys. They are planning on building on the back.

Clyde worked one winter in WV, then he quit and came home to farm for $1.00 a day.

Then was farming back here better than whatever job he could get in WV?

Denton - Yes. He was working a prop job, 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., in the sawmill, ... making timbers for the mines.

That work dried up also?

Denton - Yes.

Had you saved up enough money to buy some land?

Denton - . . . when I bought this place, I had $10.00. That was my down payment. I had two boys pretty well grown. We cut pulpwood and chemical wood. ... We cleared it and collected the logs. Then we built our house. We lived in the little house up on the hill for three years. Then we got this house. We were scared, but a lot of people were more than needy. We have never wanted for food or anything.

John - I remember a family coming over here one time asking for help. They said the only thing we have to eat at our house is beets. I probably gave them some money to buy some food. They were very poor. I don't know how they lived. They had a garden and canned food. They all had pigs and chickens to live on. A lot of them had milk cows. We used to buy milk from some of the people. At that time we bought milk for 10 cents a quart. We would take a gallon tin can and we would buy two quarts for 20 cents. My wife could call up the butcher in Damascus, and he would put some meat on the train. They would bring it up to the station here in Konnarock, and we would get it at the post office for 25 cents a pound.

If we move up to your teenage years, you went to school to 7th grade and then went off timbering. You got paid for that?

Robert - I received pay for timbering; but, it all came back to my family here. Your wages weren't much. Back then people helped one another. If someone would get sick, we would go in and take care of their crops or get their wood in. It was a neighborly thing. If we were making apple butter, I would peel apples or if they had what they called "bean-stringing" or "corn-husking." We would help no matter where they were in the general community of Konnarock. Mother would go and sit with the sick at night. She would fix their meals, do their wash, or help them can.

Even though the timber had been cleared in Konnarock, I wanted to return. Everyone knows you here. In other places, you can live next door to someone and never know that person.

What other changes don't you like?

Robert - All these trees they are setting out here and putting all that poison. It's polluting the water—all the chemicals they are putting on them. Another thing is that you can't sell things off your farm. You could sell meat and eggs, chickens, pigs; but, you can't do that now because of the law. They've got that clamped down for those big companies out West.

Did you do any paid work when you were a teenager?

Nervie - Well, all we would do is go and stay with somebody if they needed it, like a hired girl or something. I've done that a few times. They would have a baby and they would need somebody to help out. We'd stay overnight ... about a week or two. The mother was in bed most of the time. I got paid a dollar and a quarter a week. I . . . remember you could buy a cotton print dress for 98 cents and a pair of hose for a quarter so that would be my week's worth.

They didn't try to give you vegetables or something instead?

Nervie - No, not that I know of, 'cause everybody had vegetables. It was the only way of making a living.

Did the flu epidemic of 1917 affect you?

Nervie - My daddy had it. His hair come out, but he lived.

If you could go back to when you were 12, 13, 14, what is your fondest memory?

Everett - Running the mountains and hunting. We did a lot of squirrel hunting and groundhog hunting. We fished. You could go out most any day and get a mess of fish. When I was about 14, they started stocking. We went to the mountain streams more where they weren't stocking. There's a lot of streams you can go to now and catch a lot of mountain trout. I used to tell people that groundhog was our meat then.

Helena - One of my fondest memories was when my cousin and I would gather elder flowers and polkberries and sell them. There was a truck that came by that we sold to. The Training School had these fields allotted for farming. Out in the middle, where it was swampy, there would be elder flower bushes. We would pick the flowers and take them to the top of our chicken house. We would dry them and peel them off and sell them. We used to do that to buy material to make us a dress. We would have fun doing it.

Our mothers made worm medicine. They used it for coughs or croup. They gave us turpentine and sugar or lamp oil. We didn't know what it was to go to the doctor. If we stuck a nail in our foot, they would put turpentine on it and wrap it up. I know I had a stone bruise on my foot. They thought my foot was going to rot off so they took what they called "yar" and the white of an egg and beat that up and made a poultice and put it on my foot.

Essie Wyatt's sister-in-law, Beulah, she was a nurse too and a midwife. She took care of the newborn babies. This was before Sister Sofia came. She was a Shumate. She married a Shumate.

CHAPTER 4. FARMS & GARDENS/DEPRESSION

Providing sustenance for one's family was a major activity in Konnarock, as virtually every home had a garden and/or farm with some kind of livestock. The land around Konnarock varies in quality, but people found sufficient areas for farming such crops as tobacco, wheat, corn, and oats. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the produce brought some cash into the homes for many, but many families chose to give away their surplus food to the people in need. Preserving and sharing local food was apparently quite widespread in the first half of the century, so much so that the Great Depression had a minimal impact here, as many of our interviewees even felt it went unnoticed.

* * * * * * * * * *

Denton - Everybody had a garden and farmed. They kept milk cows. Everyone shared. The Hassingers would plow a big field and cut it into gardens, school gardens. Hassingers would allot a plot for each family, and the oldest child would raise crops for his or her family. The Hassingers furnished the fertilizer, feed, and everything. Lots of houses didn't have gardens. The houses were close together—two rows on each hill. The school gardens helped out a lot. All you had to pay was a bag of fertilizer. You got a prize if you raised a good garden, $25 for the best garden. I got the prize one year. The kids worked hard, and of course the parents helped them.

J.D. - We just farmed enough to keep us going. If you didn't grow your own crops, you didn't have anything to eat.

Alice - Grandfather Henderson had a good sized farm, so Dad worked for him and just whoever he could until the Lincoln Furniture Factory came. Then, Dad worked at the factory.

Dora - Most people had gardens and they tried to can enough to tide them over through the winter. They had learned how to can from the Training School. People raised hogs to kill. They also killed rabbits and squirrels for food. There weren't many deer. Money was needed to purchase flour, sugar, coffee, and tobacco.

Jean - We always had two cows, a hog, some chickens and a horse, until you got so you didn't need a horse. I don't know I ever saw a garden plowed without a horse. We didn't have a tractor. We tried to raise about a half acre of corn for the hog. I remember hoeing the land.

My parents didn't own land. They took care of my uncle, Bob Shumate. He owned 20 or 30 acres. My uncle was crippled—a horse kicked him once.

Essie - We bought two farms and there was a lot of work to do. I cooked for workhands, maybe nine or ten. My brothers lived up on a hill. If the threshers stayed till about dark, I guess we fed them too. We took so many and my brother's wife also fed workhands. Dad worked on the farm and mommy stayed home, canning and things like that. We owned what they called the Hayes place. There were fruit trees and many acres.

My mother, lots of times, would climb like a squirrel, and pick those apples. She would put on some of Dad's overalls. They didn't have slacks like we do now. I'd stay and babysit my brother's four children. I was a babysitter and they went out and worked. That suited me fine. I never did like to work out. I liked to cook so that worked out well.

Practically everything was farming. You had to sell your produce, get cows, and sell milk to make a little money. You had to make it yourself.

Did you all sell much stuff?

Essie - Yes, we sold produce from the farm and got in with the milk Company—those big cans.

Did you have a bunch of cows?

Essie - We usually had two cows. When you are on a farm and you go into the milk business, you got to keep that milk going.

That's not that many cows.

Essie - No, but they had calves and we sold them. It was mostly the milk companies that we dealt with. Then they would sell a cow if she got too old ... they would kill her for beef. You had to get into something—milk—or sell things off the farm.

Carrington - We had a garden. And they provided what they called a school garden in a whole lot of these fields. And that way everyone could have two gardens. My dad usually had two.

See, they provided that for us at the school. They drew numbers; they were numbered. The property they had, over there, you know, where the cemetery is. Mr. Waddell used to live there. They would lot the fields and number them. Then they would draw numbers at school of those gardens, if you wanted one. I think they paid a little. Dad did, I guess. The children would draw numbers; and, the family would farm the land.

Lloyd - The people here farm. They paid two or three dollars per acre. They married into the families to get the farms. The people that could have stayed and farmed here didn't have a chance. Workhorses, Belgium horses, the prettiest horses you ever saw. You needed a set of horses then more than now. He'd break them and put them to work. He broke several teams. He was horse crazy. I love to ride them. Everybody out in the country rode horses. It was the only way you had to get around. People raised corn. He had a good bit of corn up there. He raised all his feed for his horses, cattle and stuff. He could raise more on an acre of land than anybody I ever saw. He had about 40 to 50 acres of farm land and woodland too, and you hoed every hill of it. It was work.

Robert - We raised crops, corn, potatoes, hay. At that time, nearly everyone had a cow, chickens, hogs, and most everybody in this country farmed and were self-supporting because when it got up into the '30s it was a tough time here. At that time, this was one of the prettiest valleys you ever saw. It was farmed, it was kept in grass and crops. It was beautiful, and then the war broke out and the Depression came along. People went to going to the factories to working, and in the '40s and '50s and all that went by and this country growed up. People got rid of their cattle and horses. They let everything grow up.

Everybody growed about everything they ate—very little that you bought. There weren't any jobs and we didn't have any money. What little bit of money you did get, you would buy a little coffee or a little sugar or a little salt. About everybody in this country had their own milk and butter, their eggs, their meats—pork or beef.

Did people trade food stuffs?

Robert - During the Depression they would sell eggs for 2 cents a dozen. If somebody had some meat, you could go work for that, or potatoes or corn or different things. Got your bread stuff, you would take it to the mill every week and have it ground. When my grandmother's family was grown up, it took a 25 lb. bag of flour every morning to make their bread for breakfast. We would take a bushel and a half or 2 bushel of corn down to the mill, and usually it was Thursday or Friday, and have it ground into cornmeal. In a week's time you would run out of meal before the next week. Now you can take 5 lb. of meal, and it will last a family that size for 30 days.

Back then food tasted a whole lot better than it does now. All these chemicals weren't in there. They would put on a pot of beans in the morning and cook them all day long until evening. They were really good. Now they put on a mess of beans in these crockpots for 30 minutes ... and they have them on the table. You could go out of here in the mornings and people in the country would be frying ham and you could smell it.

You could go out here and raise cabbage and what you didn't put in kraut, you could dig a trench and pull the cabbage up and stick that head down in that ground and rake the dirt over there. You would have cabbage all winter long until the spring of the year. They would be crisp as you please. Now you can go out there and in 30 days they will rot. You could go put your milk in the spring house and at dinner time that milk would be as cold as if you got it out of the refrigerator.. Now you take the same springs and do the milk that way and by 12 o'clock it would be bad. It won't keep. You could find a little sinkhole and take apples and put in there and put a few leaves over there and they would keep good all winter.

Why is that?

Robert - The changes of the seasons, and they've got this hybrid stuff and chemicals mixed in with it.

Elmer - When I was a kid, I raised a couple of hogs and a couple of cattle. We killed the hogs and salted them down. Back at that time, you had to. You don't never see no hog pork and stuff killed and salted down no more. You had to board whatever piece separate and salt it down. Or some people put sugar on them. You had to cut and chop it up and put it on a board.

When you salted them down, then what did you do with them?

Elmer - After the pork was salted, you would just let it lay there and cure out. You would hang it up and let it dry like the ham stuff in a granary where we kept corn.

My mother always raised a bunch of chickens, too. [. . .] As a teenager, I would work the neighbors' tobacco crops and hoe their corn. I received a dime an hour.

Ella Mae - L. C. Hassinger, that's where my grandfather got the farm. They bought it from him, ... cut the trees ... and built a little one room log house. They built another house and

my father lived here, what we always called the White House. He'd help farm up on the mountain.

I think maybe part of the timber was cut down while they were sawing down there. My father bought the piece of land; it still had the stumps on it. He grubbed the stumps.

I know my grandfather had let the taxes run up on it, and they were going to take it away from him. L. C. Hassinger talked to my daddy and told him if he didn't take it over, they would be out of a home, you know, over the taxes. Well, my daddy got in with L. C. Hassinger someway and accepted and bought it. I know he paid thirty dollars a month till he got that place paid for. And Grandmother and Grandfather lived there till they died.

The only thing I ever done was help my father and work on the farm. It's the only thing I ever knew. We had chickens and turkeys and guinea hens. They would lay eggs and we would eat their eggs. That is the way we had that. The possums and things would come in and they would run the hens off of the nest, and the hawks would get the chickens. They would get in the nests at night, when we'd set a hen to hatch little ones. They would break the hens up, the possums would.

We raised cane and made molasses. And he'd grow buckwheat and beat it out with a stick and take it to Chilhowie or somewhere and have it ground and make us buckwheat pancakes with molasses. It was good.

Mae S. - I wasn't big enough to use a hoe. I had to pull weeds and I called a balk a dart. And they kidded me the rest of my life because of that. There was a row here and a row here, and that was the balk between here. And I called it a dart.

We used to farm and raise corn, oats, rice, and beans. Use to raise cane to make molasses. Brack was home part of the time to help with that. We had a few heads of cattle, our own milk, hogs and chickens. After Brack left, we still had to tend to some beans or a patch of corn.

Fairy - I had a garden and a cow. I grew just about everything but wheat and would put up a thousand or more cans of food every summer—everything from apple butter to onions to pickles to jellies ... strawberries and raspberries. I also gathered some herbs to raise a little money, but they didn't bring much money. I gathered the herbs right on my land, 50 or some acres. I had one dairy cow and sold a calf from her every other year.

Roy - You didn't raise that much, vegetables and stuff like that. Most everybody had a milk cow and a hog to butcher in the fall.

Wardie - We grew corn and potatoes; we didn't have tobacco because back then they claimed tobacco wouldn't grow in this area of the country. They brought it in from Kentucky. I raised tobacco some after WWII. I made pretty good money.

Do you remember the Depression and going back to those times? Was it hard or was it ok because everyone had a farm?

Wardie - Well, we didn't have too much of a hard time because we had a corn mill, ground corn, flour, and wheat and stuff like that. And, we had a garden. Mother took care of it. It was a small garden, about a half-acre. My favorite things to grow in the garden were cucumbers, squash, and such stuff like that. I gathered strawberries,

raspberries, huckleberries, blackberries along the road. We used horses a lot on the farm.

My father did not own any land; however, Grandfather Trivett owned about 1,300 acres. We raised dairy cattle, sheep, hogs and turkeys. My grandpa had a lot of beef cattle. We fished for trout; set traps; shot birds—grouse; and collected honey from beehives.

Madge - We would gather polk berries by the barrels and would take them to the road, and a truck came by and picked them up.

My daddy collected ginseng after he retired. He sold cherry bark. He peeled cherry trees. They had to cut that out because they were losing all the trees.

Helena - We farmed. My mother did more of it than my father because he worked away from home. Mother took all of the kids and we learned to milk when we were "knee high to a duck." We had a garden and raised corn, beans, and potatoes. We also had apple trees; we raised cane and made molasses.

Everett - When I was a boy, everybody had to hoe and get the corn in, plant and dig potatoes. We always had a big garden and put up about everything. We always had a cow, maybe two cows.

Nervie - We always had something growing in the garden—corn and everything like that. And we kept a hog and a cow, about like everybody. There were hardly any jobs for women back then, so they just lived whatever way they had to.

They kept plenty of unpaid work at home for us—hoeing the corn and everything. People knew about what they had to have back then—dig the potatoes and hoe them. And it kept us pretty busy.

Well, father used to have a little old mill where he would grind grain. After he quit cutting timber, just farming and doing in that little old mill of his. Certain days he'd grind. People would go and have their feed and their mill ground. It was a very little mill. He would take a toll out of each bunch, and then when there was any extra, would make feed out of it.

Cordelia - I worked on the farm and pulled weeds in the garden when I was 13. We planted corn fields first. We preserved our food in the spring house. I learned how to can from my grandma and enjoyed the work. I canned more than any woman in Smyth County.

Blaine - We had a garden as long as we were able to do it. That is the way it used to be. Then freezers came along. It made it easier. The older way of life is so different. I started preaching 57 years ago, and how things have changed.

Bernice - When I first got married, I lost two babies. It hurt me at the time but since then I think it was probably a blessing, because I didn't have enough sense to know how to bring up a child. Then the Lord gave me three others.

What did you do with your time when you didn't have children?

Bernice - I worked in the garden. We had tomatoes, corn, beans. We canned and did everything. We did our own canning in our house. We would can several hundred cans. You couldn't go to the store and buy it like you can now.

We kept a bunch of cows and sold milk. We sold hogs then too. The men would go hunting. They would bring in a bunch of squirrels, and we had to skin them and fix them ourselves.

I cleaned fish. My dad liked to fish and my brothers liked to fish. My grandfather was a great fisherman.

Hettie - There was some trout, 'cause people still fished. One time we had caught about 7 trout, and I had got up one morning (my mother was dead), and I fried these fish. My dad wasn't quite ready for breakfast, and I told him I was going on to milk the cow that when he got up he could eat. I had everything ready. When I came back to the house, I asked him where the fish were. He had ate them all!

Most people had a little farm and raised their garden, corn, maybe had a cow and some chickens. They had plenty to eat.

Gladys - We don't eat pork because we're vegetarians. You will find that little over half of your Seventh Day Adventists are vegetarians.

How did the Depression affect your family?

Mae S. - Well, not too bad. We raised a lot of stuff—chickens, eggs, milk, and butter. Sometimes we'd kill beef. We never went hungry.

Did you need some money to get along? What was it necessary to have money for?

Mae S. - For clothes and a few groceries—coffee and sugar, flour and meal, stuff to feed the pig and the cows.

Carrington - We didn't have electricity until Appalachian Power came in the '30s. We had been used to having electricity in West Virginia. They would give us certain days to do laundry or ironing up there. You didn't have it here; and, I missed that so bad. We used country lights or lamps. And I couldn't see with them or without them.

I didn't know it at the time myself that the Depression was so bad, until I read a lot about it. I guess it was a lot worse other places, the western section. I don't know but I remember they published it on television occasionally where they had all those dust storms.

Cordelia - We lived on a farm up here and we lived about as well as we ever did as far as I know. People would work in their gardens and can and put up stuff and raise what they could on their places to eat. Everybody seemed to be working and trying to keep something to eat during the winter time, and they got along pretty good. We had enough to eat and enough to keep the taxes paid on the place.

Nervie - When the Depression came, everything went the same at home. I didn't know there was anything wrong. We never did buy newspapers. We lived about the same way all the time—growed our garden and canned and had our own food, a lot of it. I never did notice a change.

My stepmother, some of her family, would come and they would walk from Meadowview up here. My brother would walk to Damascus and back in a day. I don't guess they had money to pay for the train.

CHAPTER 5. HOW TO MAKE A LIVING HERE

What brought Konnarock's first residents up to this high valley under the shadow of Whitetop Mountain was wage work, offered by Hassinger Lumber Company. Wage work and self-employment off the family farm are the topics of this chapter. The interviewees demonstrate that there was a mix of job opportunities available for people with the right skills, connections, ambition, or enough start-up capital to establish their own trade.

* * * * * * * * * *

Did the men work six days a week at the Hassinger Lumber Co.?

Essie - Oh yes, Monday through Saturday. Now, I think they got off at 5:00 p.m. on Saturday, one hour early. They worked ten hours a day, from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. They got to go home for dinner if they worked late. Well, Dad could come home for dinner because he lived right in town.

Did Tom get a job with the CC camp (Civilian Conservation Corps)?

Essie - Yes. Some of the local men worked for the CC camp in the 1930s. After the camp left, there was no more work.

When I finished school, I planned to study nursing in Abingdon. My sister-in-law graduated from Johnston Memorial. When working, she was on her feet 10 to 12 hours a day. Her work was hard. I heard how tired she got, and still had to go. My girlfriend, Mary Jones, and I were afraid it would be too tiring, so we didn't try. I graduated in 1930, right out of school, when I was planning to go into Johnston Memorial. First thing you know, we started dating and then we got married and here we are. She is dead now.

When they took out the high school, that made it hard. You had to get your transportation out even down to Damascus.

It was strictly farming. You farmed and that was it. A lot of people started leaving. They had to go to the coal fields or out someplace where there was business.

My brother worked at the Konnarock Company Store. It was nice. It had anything you wanted. They raised their cattle, their meat, their hogs. It wasn't shipped in or anything. I guess people brought produce there. They had a charge account. At the end of the month, you went and paid your bill. I used to go there to get things. They had anything you wanted—shoes, clothes, meat—anything. My mother did it when I was growing up. Bill Cregger was the manager of the store. He left, moved to Abingdon, it seems like.

What did you buy at the store?

Elmer - Well, mostly sugar and coffee. Salt and stuff like that. We bought flour. We never raised no wheat. We raised a lot of corn. They used to have mills around to grind it. They'd take so much of it as a grinding fee, something like a quart or a half gallon. I don't remember. They had a measuring cup there ... If they had a doubt, they had a barrel they put it in. You shelled your own corn first.

There's different places where we had these mills. They had one there in Konnarock but the mill is torn down now. And then Victor Blevins had a mill on down the road there about two miles from here. I remember three mills.

How would you take those sacks down there? Would you walk with them?

Elmer - Yeah. We didn't have no horses or no mules or nothing. There used to be an old wagon rolled over here. One day a week is about what they ground.

So, when you got to be a teenager, did you still do that?

Elmer - Oh, yeah, had to for years till they got to coming out with this meal stuff already ground.

What could you get for a dozen eggs?

Elmer - I believe 12 cents a dozen.

They give you money?

Elmer - No, you had to swap for something. You'd steal eggs and take them and swap them for candy. People would raise live chickens and take them and swap for something—coffee, sugar or something like that. It'd take about two chickens to get a pound of coffee.

After working at Lincoln Furniture Factory, I cut timber for C. J. Sheffield for about 3 or 4 years. When my daddy died, I took his job. Sheffield came from Galax. At one time he owned 1,400 acres up here. He had a sawmill in the '50s. I cut a lot of timber for him. However, it was not virgin timber. It had been cut over probably a couple of times. The best wood was Poplar.

Dora - There was one store down at Konnarock. A Rhymer had one on 58 and a Blevins had one down here at Konnarock near that bridge. Gro Brewer had one right across from the Weavers, where they tore that building down, which became Stanberry's store. They would let us go to that, and pop was 5 cents a bottle. That was low.

What did they do at the stores besides sell things? Did they play music and talk?

Dora - Yes, and maybe played checkers. Another store was right there at the bridge. ... Blevins, that was at Konnarock. He moved up to this bridge where you go across Iron Mountain where Mac Daniel lived. He didn't stay there too long. He got sick and went across the mountain.

When Hassinger Co. left in 1928, they started the CC camps for people to work. Work on the roads and if the woods got on fire they went out and fought the fire. They would get the big rocks out and fill up the chug holes and put a little brush on the side of the road. That continued through the Depression. They paid about 25 cents or 50 cents an hour.

What did the people do for employment after Hassinger left besides the CC?

Dora - I don't know about the lower end of Konnarock, but a lot of the people up here was on welfare. I took up a store tab. They would let you run a store cap—Billy Greer had a store and the Weavers had a store. They would put it down on these little books, and when Arde would come in we would take the money to the store and pay them.

Was there anybody who run up an account that for some reason couldn't pay it?

Dora - I don't know whether to say this or not, but they are still doing it.

They brought in a convict camp down here in the bottom below the church. A lot of them worked at it. Arde worked at it. He was a timekeeper. A lot of them drove dump trucks, and they built the road down to Damascus and Chilhowie in the '50s.

They started putting a lot of factories over in Marion, and a lot of them are still riding out to the factories.

Ella Mae - The commissary was where everybody bought groceries. I think Frank Stansberry was the first man to ever put up a grocery store here. It was after that one went out. The first one he had was down here where Emmett Pugh lived. He started out with clothes first. He went from clothes to a grocery store. And he bought this from John L. Sullivan.

I know there use to be a family of Hayses that lived at the back of the Rupard house. Their mother would borrow so much stuff like soda and salt and stuff like that to season with. After the Girls School come in up here they had a lot of clothes sent in to them and they would sell them, and a lot of people bought them. My grandmother Huffman, she washed for the Girls School for years, and that is how she clothed Uncle Nath's daughters.

I know they bought a lot of chow for cattle to eat, fed them when they milked them. Well, they would get sacks—white sacks, flowered sacks—and they would make clothes out of that. They would make men's shirts out of the white ones and kids' clothes and women's clothes out of the colored.

I have a dress in here now that when they had clothes in the jot'em down [charge account] store I gave 50 cents for it. And I still own it, and I still wear it. They called it the jot'em down store. That's when Frank Stansberry first got second handed clothes and started to sell them.

My daddy was a carpenter and he built a lot of houses. He was the main one that built the Lutherans' log church on the Laurel. And then they had a big dinner up there. They took up $400 to take care of the building. And they built a what-you-call-it for wheelchairs. We went up there to clean the windows and clean the house real good. It was so pretty. And the outside is just as neat. The logs are just so good and solid. They come off of the White Top Mountain.

Lincoln, here in Damascus, is the only one that I know of that had a big factory. It closed down in '55. I worked down there six years myself, after my kids got old enough to go to school. Most everybody in Konnarock worked at Lincoln in Damascus.

Fairy - My husband used to stalk deer and turkey for the Forest Service. The only money coming in was from selling a few things from the farm. He had probably a hundred apple trees. At Christmas time we'd sell a lot of apples. And, we had eight big cherry trees and we'd sell cherries in the summer time.

We had a chestnut orchard too. I remember when the chestnut blight came. It killed all our trees. We finally used them for firewood.

Wardie - I worked for the Works Progress Administration (WPA), carrying water. The WPA was one of those Depression era programs. The Administration built the Rock School in Damascus. The workers built other things too, like outside toilets. I also worked as a farmer and did a little bit of carpentry.

Did you ever have a fire on your farm?

Wardie - Oh, yes. People let the forest burn.

Did you ever know of people setting fires on purpose?

Wardie - Yes, people set fires just to burn the woods.

Was there much moonshine around back then?

Wardie - Yes, lots of it. Most everyone drank.

Did you ever make any on your place?

Wardie - Oh, yes.

Wouldn't you get in trouble with the law doing that?

Wardie - Could. They never came to me.

Was it pretty strong stuff?

Wardie - Some of it was.

Madge - When we lived in Rugby, my father worked for a logging company cutting timber. My mother took care of the home. My husband got a job with the Forest Service, maintaining the roads.

Did you get a job or did you stay home with the kids?

Madge - I got a sewing job; it lasted five weeks.

How come you didn't keep doing it?

Madge - I didn't like it. I liked sewing at home but sewing in a factory ... The factory, Mr. Casuals, was located between Independence and Troutdale.

Were there other Konnarock women working over there?

Madge - Yes, we rode together over there. That was in the 50's.

What do you think people did in Konnarock to keep going?

Wilma - They did a lot of hunting. I remember the old Frank Stanberry store. There were always a bunch of old men down there bragging.

Carrington - Father was a blacksmith with the Hassinger Co. when we come over from Ashe County. Father did a whole lot. He had horses and wagons to take care of all that. I guess he learned the hard way. He was born in 1870; so way back then blacksmiths were very useful. They made all of the tools—hoes, and everything that they had. After he came here, he done horse shoeing. The Company had horses, of course, and wagons. I don't know what all he did there.

Lloyd - Well, my father opened up a place on White Top Mountain that him and John Blakemore (out of Abingdon; John Blakemore owned the place). They was in WWI together. John Blakemore and some lawyers bought 600 acres of land right on top of that mountain, and they opened a summer resort 'cause there wasn't no places around this country to go to then. Nothing like Hollywood\Dollywood, not even a place with lakes or nothing. They opened it up in '19 and they had Folk Festivals.

To go to White Top Mountain, there was an old dirt road—rough—you could hardly get over it. Sometimes they had a toll gate. Cost you a dollar a car to get through the toll gate and two dollars a truck. Sometimes you'd take in $100 in the middle of the week. The resort lasted until 1939. My father made money at it, but these lawyers and John Blakemore owned the place. Of course, they made the big money. My daddy, he made good money.

We had a house up the road here and we had a house up there. We just lived up there in the summer and closed the place in the winter. Of course we kept cattle up there and had to go up there and feed them, and we had some buffaloes up there. We had to go up there and feed the buffaloes in the winter. Sometimes you couldn't get up there, and there had to be enough feed for them to survive.

Why did you have buffalo up there?

Lloyd - I think they brought 3 buffaloes out of the state of Washington, just for people to come and see them. They raised a calf, and they tried to breed them both with the cattle but it didn't work.

But you got up in there to some of those places and got timber out?

Lloyd - Oh, yeah. We did it with a crosscut saw and with horses—skipped it out with horses, a team of horses. Then we sawed it on a little portable saw. We cut about 3,000 foot a day. You made a living, just about all. I really done more trucking than anything else. You could go to the mines and get a load of coal. It would take you all day long. The roads were so rough to get over. ... sell a load of coal for $30 delivered. And that was a good bit of money cause cash was cheap, and you'd buy coal for as low as $2.00 a ton at the mines. A man in a truck making $20 a day. He's making money.

I did drive a school bus about 8 years over here when they first started sending kids from Konnarock. This Smyth County area, they wouldn't pay for the kids to go to school in Washington County, so they sent them to Sugar Grove School. And then they sent the high school all the way to Marion.

The county didn't let out of school, as long as I drove a bus, for snow or anything else. They traipsed through the snow, woods. I only missed one day on account of the weather.

I also pushed snow for the State when the convict camps were building the roads in 1954, 1955, and 1956.

People have about anything they want any more. When they get what they want, they still aren't satisfied. They got to go try to get something else—drugs and everything else. Back then, they made moonshine, but that was all. Some stills were cut up, but some made it. Plenty of the stills were as clean as a kitchen. Some was in it for the money, and others, to see who could make the best. It was more pure and safe than it is now.

Some people that made moonshine, it was the only way they knew to make a living. They protected their still. They'd kill ya.

Cordelia - My husband was the sheriff. He cut up stills and got paid for it.

Bernice - When my father first came here, he taught school around Fairwood on this side of Sugar Grove on Rt. 16. He farmed a little bit and he scaled on a Hassinger loading train. He measured the logs that they cut. They had a little log train that went out through the country, and if you'll go out that road you'll find where it is. They cut the logs and they would load them on a flatbed, and he scaled the logs as they cut them. He did that until he retired. Before he went into scaling logs, he had a commissary that he ran. Mr. Barnes was overseer of it and it burned down; but, they rebuilt it. Lawrence Cregger came and took it over. It was like a general store.

We gathered herbs. We could make a little money that way.

Who taught you how to do that?

Bernice - I guess my folks, my dad, my family.

Hettie - I gathered a lot of herbs when I was young—bought all of my clothes, mostly, and things I wanted. My family didn't have the money to keep us in clothes. My parents

thought that kids should be busy, so they let us out to do things we could—I hoed corn.

You would make money doing that?

Bernice - Yes, my sister and brother-in-law. We raised our own corn and made our own cornbread and a lot of times our wheat. We would take it to the mill, and they would give us flour for it.

We called it Buck Vine. It would grow a foot out of the ground and just shake it out, and we would get several dollars. It was used for medicine. All of these stores around here would buy it. Then they would sell it somewhere else to be made into medicine.

What about some other herb names?

Bernice - Lobellia, elderberry flowers. One year they sold polk berry jam. They could gather it and put it in a kettle and make it the way apple butter is made. The jam would bring a pretty good price. We would pick polk berries practically all day. We got elderberry blooms and we would dry, shake, and sell them. We would get a pretty good price for them.

Hettie - Cherry bark.

Bernice - We would peel all the wild cherries around and dry it and then take that little skin off of it and break it up in pieces.

Some people almost starved. I do remember a time or two that we had to make cornbread for breakfast. We went through a lot of hardships except just what we grew on the farm. We didn't have any money to buy it with.

They worked for the farmers for a dime an hour. You could get all the work you wanted for a dime an hour. People would work a 9-10 hour day and then buy a bag of flour.

Gladys - I know they did a lot of erosion control. Then there was the WPA. ... I remember them working on this road.

Hettie - I raised a garden, milked cows, made butter, etc. I picked blackberries for 10 cents a gallon and sold them. The blackberries grew wild in the briars. I also picked strawberries and carried them down to Creek Junction. I did various things to raise a little money. I also did some housekeeping for the Lutheran pastors that were here, and I worked some for Dr. Meyer.

Did you do any trading? Like did you take things from the farm and go to the store?

Thelma - Eggs and butter. Regulations on milk and butter and things like that probably took care of that. I don't know when exactly that came into being, but we can't sell butter now, even if you had a cow.

What was your father's work?

Roy - He worked in timber. He worked here for Hassinger and worked in West Virginia, too. Circle Mills moved in after Hassinger. They did some sawing. The timber was so big they used 9 foot cross cut saws. Sometimes you wouldn't have 6 inches to pull those things. They primarily cut oak and hemlock, some spruce. They didn't cut hardwood because it wasn't worth much then. They cut poplar too. That bottom that goes down to the old depot that used to be the lumber yard. I think they had to carry

at least 1 million feet at all times there. They were loading it in boxcars every day. They just cut up to the first limbs and quit. The other laid there and rotted.

There used to be fires up here, but they didn't take a lot of lumber out. I never knew of anyone getting killed in a fire here.

I just piled lumber and stuff in the lumber yards when I was young.

Who was hiring the people to work after Hassingers closed?

Denton - Frank Stansberry had a store and a farm. My boys could handle horses, did plowing, etc. His father-in-law owned the farm. The boys did team work as they knew horses. Frank made a fortune. When he left there and went to Chilhowie, he knew how much money he had. People would charge their stuff until they raised their crops.

John - In the 1930s, roads had been built so they could go to Marion and Abingdon and Mouth of Wilson. They could drive and get out, but it was a long, rough road because the roads were not in very good shape.

There was an apple orchard down at Chilhowie, Bonham Apple Orchard, where people would work in the fall of the year. Then there were farms in the lowlands that people could get jobs in. I think some of them even commuted to those jobs from here.

There was an auto repair shop which is still working and doing vital repairs and doing fairly well I guess. A lot of them went to the mines up north in Dickenson or Lee Co.

Some would set up small sawmills out in the woods and saw wood and sell it for lumber, sell it for firewood. They would saw rough lumber and people would use that to build barns.

What did your mother do?

Robert - She was a housewife. She would make crafts, little brooms, little cups out of rock, ashtrays. There was people that came from New York after the Training School came in, and they would want that stuff. They used to come down here often, every year, looking for arrowheads and some crafts or something like that. Just take a lump of shale and carve it out. When it was damp, like when they would dig a grave up here in the cemetery, those chunks would come out and you could carve it.

The brooms, what were those like?

Robert - They were little wooden brooms out of birch. She would get white birch and carve it down and strip it down.

People from New York wanted those?

Robert - Yes, you couldn't keep them made. They'd pay 10 to 15 cents a piece.

Everett - For cash income, I peeled cherry bark, dug may apple roots, herbed, and raised a few chickens to take a few eggs to the store. When we peeled cherry bark, we would leave early in the morning and come back late in the evening. They bought it at the grocery store. We had a grocery store up here; that was Grover Brewer's, where Weaver's store is now. We could take it there and sell; we had a place at Marion if we could get over there. Of course, we didn't have much transportation. There was a truck that picked it up. From the time I was a boy until I was almost old enough to leave home, I peeled cherry bark.

Of course my dad, after Hassinger Lumber Co. went out, he logged. He kept horses and logged with horses.

So even though the Hassinger Co. had pretty much cut everything, there was still logging?

Everett - There was still logging we could do with horses. It was smaller and we usually took the logs to these sawmills.

So you made some money doing that? Did you go around and do some of that when you were old enough?

Everett - When I got big enough, they had a job they used to call "doodling" sawdust, where it fell down under the saw, you shoveled it up and hauled it out on a wheelbarrow.

I went to CC camp when I got 15. They took anybody that wanted to go. You was supposed to be about 16, but you could lie a little bit and get in at 15. I stayed in Marion over a year in the barracks by Hungry Mother Park.

We never had land really. Dad just worked there on the farm with the Umbargers. Afterwards Dad worked for other people. There were little logging places sprung up here and there, and he would contract maybe cutting and skidding it out for them where they could get it.

I moved back here in '72 and I started a business down here. We had an old barn up there that was built in the '50s, cinder block. Me and Helena's brother started a garage in there. He was a mechanic and I tried to be. I built that garage, Trent's, and it's still mine. I started State Inspection before the state inspector was in this country. We made a living at it. We wasn't expensive. We didn't charge a whole lot. We didn't try to make no money; all we tried to do was make a living.

Helena - He used to, after Hassinger left, dig purple laurels and sell them. That's how they paid for land at that time. My mother and dad both did that. There must have been a lot of laurel around here at the time. Of course, the other people sold it too. This guy out of New York, I think he was an Anderson, they would dig loads of this purple laurel and send it to New York.

They would ship out the live shrub for landscaping. I can't remember them digging them, but at that time I do remember the guy coming to our house one time in the '30s. He brought us a big long radio for Christmas. Back then we didn't have things like that, and he brought us a bucket of hard candy for Christmas.

I helped peel cherry bark too. When you peel it, there is some of it that you can take, the little thin skipping off the top of it. And, if you did, you got more out of it than if you left it on.

We sold calves, chickens, and eggs. We raised most everything except flour. My youngest brother and I used to carry the corn to a place where Hassinger had the commissary. In the back of it the commissary, somebody had a mill and we would take our corn there and have it ground. Everett would take a sack on his shoulder, and I would take a sack on my shoulder, and we would take the corn to have it ground. That was about where the rock pool sits.

J.D. - I went to work in the sawmill for Eli Pennington for 50 cents a day. When I got old enough to go in the CC camp, I became 17 years old on the 12th day of March. I think it was the 4th day of April I went into the CC camp in 1939.

I went in there, about 2 years was about all you could stay. But, I wanted to learn to cook. And what I done, I took the dirtiest job there was cleaning out the stove, skimming the grease out. So, then I got out of the kitchen and got to waiting on tables, then I got in the kitchen and watched them cook. And then they sent me to a cook and bakers school up in New Cumberland, PA, right out of Harrisburg.

Then I came back. I was down at Basset, VA, down at Fairystone State Park, and I stayed there 25 months. I went up there and I came back. Then they sent me down to Beach, VA. What do you call it—Chesterfield County, about 22 miles out of Richmond. They transfer you, just like the Army. And then I was on a baseball team. I was the catcher. I broke my ankle. We was playing for the Third Corp Area Championship in Maryland, and I broke my ankle up there and came home. Then we moved to Fort Eustis, VA. I stayed nearly 3 and ½ years. I came out. I came home and I stayed (I don't know how long), and then I went up to Maryland and Pennsylvania and looked for a job. A bunch of us did. Then, I worked in Cambridge, Maryland in a navy base up there doing construction work. Then we went to Fairfax and we got 90 cents.

Now my dad had a sawmill. They had small mills which were run with these old steam engines. Dad had one that was a steam tractor ... had the big steel wheels on it that pulled itself. Had a big chain, a big steering wheel you drove that thing with. He had it right there above the house.

You had to anchor them down. But what it did, it pulled itself. It was just like a gas tractor out here. You know like the old Ford tractor that used to have steel wheels on them. Well, this is what this had. It had a big steering wheel and a big chain. It was chain driven. You'd turn that thing and this chain here would get tight and pull it, you know, if you was going this way, just turn that wheel that way, that chain would tighten up.

They'd buy the timber and then saw it. Then Dad took a lot to Wilkesboro where they made furniture. We called it curly maples. They'd take maples and then when you sawed them it looked like they were curly. Posts they'd cut out. We cut out 4 x 4s. He'd take bedposts and boards to make bedroom furniture out of.

Jean - My grandfather was an engineer, drove the train for Hassingers, my mother's father. He would stop up here where the kids get on the train and he would take them down a little bit and back. He had to back up to get the logs. He would let them ride just for fun. That was a big deal to ride the train.

When my mother was about 13, the WPA came (Roosevelt started it). My mother's family had 10 children and her father died when he was real young. He left her with 10 kids to raise on her own. She had to work, wash clothes, or cook for people. They didn't have anything to live on. When the WPA started, they would let one of the children work for a certain time. My mother's sister, Blanche, worked first and they walked to Green Cove Health Center and back every day and they worked 8 hours. They got paid $15 per month. The whole family of 10 children plus my grandmother lived on that. When Blanche, Mother's oldest sister, worked her part of the program out, then Mother got to go.

My uncle worked in the convict camps that were here. He was a guard there for years. They had a camp of convicts. It was big. It went from the parsonage to the bottom. It was covered with buildings. They had 50 or 100. See, they were the ones that built all that road, Rt. 58. They cut all the trees and bushes. That was probably around 1952. They were here three or four years. It was before the new Lutheran Church was built. It might have been back in 1948. I can remember it because there were blacks there. Henry Peniel was a special one. He was in there for murder, but he loved us kids. He had a horse. The prison was owned by the state; it was state run. Then he raised a beautiful garden. He would bring us nice vegetables. Around the 4th of July Dad would always get a couple of watermelons and put them over there. Henry would come up. We would cut those watermelons. That camp left here about 1952 or 1953. Mother got a letter from him ... he wanted to come and live with us. He would do all of the outside work if we would just give him a place to live. We really liked him; he was good to us. He just helped mother milk and do everything. He was really a good worker. He said he wasn't guilty, but he took the rap for his brother or sister or something. Mama really thought about it because we really liked him. But she got to thinking what everyone in Konnarock would say if she let a black man come and stay with us. Mom had my sister and I at home, and we are two and one half years apart, then my twin sisters 10 years later. She decided not to answer his letter. She always regretted that. My uncle guarded there and we knew about all of them. There might have been only 30 or 40, but they did a lot of work here on the roads.

How many people were employed as guards?

Jean - I know of my uncle, and Bailey Eades who lived in a little house up from us. That's two. I am sure there were more. They must have had six or seven guards. That was a big job at the convict camp. He wore a uniform and had a gun and a badge. It was a good job.

They were used to living without Hassingers before they came in and they just stayed on. That is the way my grandfather and others did.

CHAPTER 6. SCHOOLS, CHURCHES & OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

Despite its small size, Konnarock has a rich history of organized activity. This chapter is about all those ways that life was made rich through social institutions. Schools begin the chapter because they formed the children and linked families that were otherwise isolated on a daily basis. Four schools are especially important to Konnarock's history: the Konnarock School, originally built by the Hassinger Company (about 1907 to about 1959); the Konnarock Training School for Girls (1925 to 1958); the Iron Mountain School for Boys (1931 to 1957); and the Seventh Day Adventists' School (1927 to present).

The Konnarock Training School for Girls, where classes began in December 1925, was a mission of the Lutheran Church. It was a boarding school, drawing students from poor families around Whitetop Mountain and elsewhere. The Iron Mountain School for Boys opened later on land donated by Hassinger. The Boys' School was a self-sufficient, 400 acre educational farm, which provided food for the students and staff at both schools. The person responsible for the school's creation was Kenneth Killinger (1895-1980), a Lutheran pastor, he also helped establish 23 churches and several health clinics in Southwest Virginia. Pastor Killinger brought a nurse, Ida Twedten, to the Girls' School in 1931, and later, Florence Singles. Their concern for the health problems around Konnarock eventually led the Lutheran Church to establish the Konnarock Medical Center, and, in 1938, Dr. Heinz Meyer (1898-1987), a Jewish refugee from the Nazi oppression in Germany, came to serve as the doctor there. Also brought in as a Lutheran mission service was a deaconness-midwife, Sister Sophie Moeller (1904-1987), who delivered over 300 babies during her career around Whitetop Mountain.

Churches now provide the glue of Konnarock's survival. Perhaps they always have. Both schools and churches added recreational opportunities to the ones originally provided by Hassinger, and the summer days of Konnarock youth reveal the power of creativity at play in the face of limited resources. Protecting a peaceful context for this rural community's work and play was apparently easy most of the time, but some interviewees tell rousing stories of law and crime.

* * * * * * * * * *

How old were you when you started school?

Essie - I wasn't hardly five.

What schools did you go to?

Essie - I went to Konnarock, my first and last day. Konnarock all the way. I went to school for eleven years, but I failed the first grade. I wasn't interested in books. We learned our ABC's; it wasn't like it is now. The teacher told Mama she thought I should repeat the first grade to get it better. That was what you called the Primer, the first year. It would make it easier to go on.

Elmer - I went down here to Konnarock School. I just went to grade school, about the fourth grade.

Mae S. - I went to Millcreek until I was 15. It was a two-room school. I was in the fifth grade and I lost my mind and got married at 15.

How did you get to the Millcreek School?

Mae S. - We walked. I'd like to show you where we walked. There was no school buses back then. It was a long ways. We went over mountains, and down over the other side. Then we finally got to where we could get in the road. It was easiest for us to go over the hill. [Editor's note: It was 8 miles over Mt. Rogers as the crow flies.]

Fairy - I went to Green Cove School. We were about midway between Konnarock and Green Cove. Some of the my children went to Konnarock School. I attended school for about four months in the 3rd grade, but I already knew everything they were teaching. I had too far to walk, so I didn't go back.

My children all graduated from high school, all but my oldest one. He could have, but he knew he was going to have to go to the Army. That kept him from going. And now they've all worked their way through ... I guess all of them have went to college.

Oh, you must be proud.

Fairy - I am proud of all my children.

I can tell that you value reading and writing and the Bible. That's a great way to be a parent.

Fairy - There wasn't a word I couldn't spell. I don't guess, till they got to taking shorthand. I'd give out their shorthand to them, and that ruined my spelling. I helped the kids with their homework at night. They all finished high school.

How come you thought that was so important?

Fairy - Well, I hadn't had no education. My husband just had a 7th grade education, and the children, they all decided they wanted an education.

Wardie - I went to Konnarock High School as far as the 5th grade. I walked over a mile to get to school.

Wilma - In the one-room schoolhouse up at Laurel Valley, they had six grades in it. The 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grades went home at lunch time. I went there the first two years of school.

Nervie - I went to the Girls School ... then the little schoolhouse up on the Laurel right below the log church. It's Von Johnson's business now. I didn't go to high school.

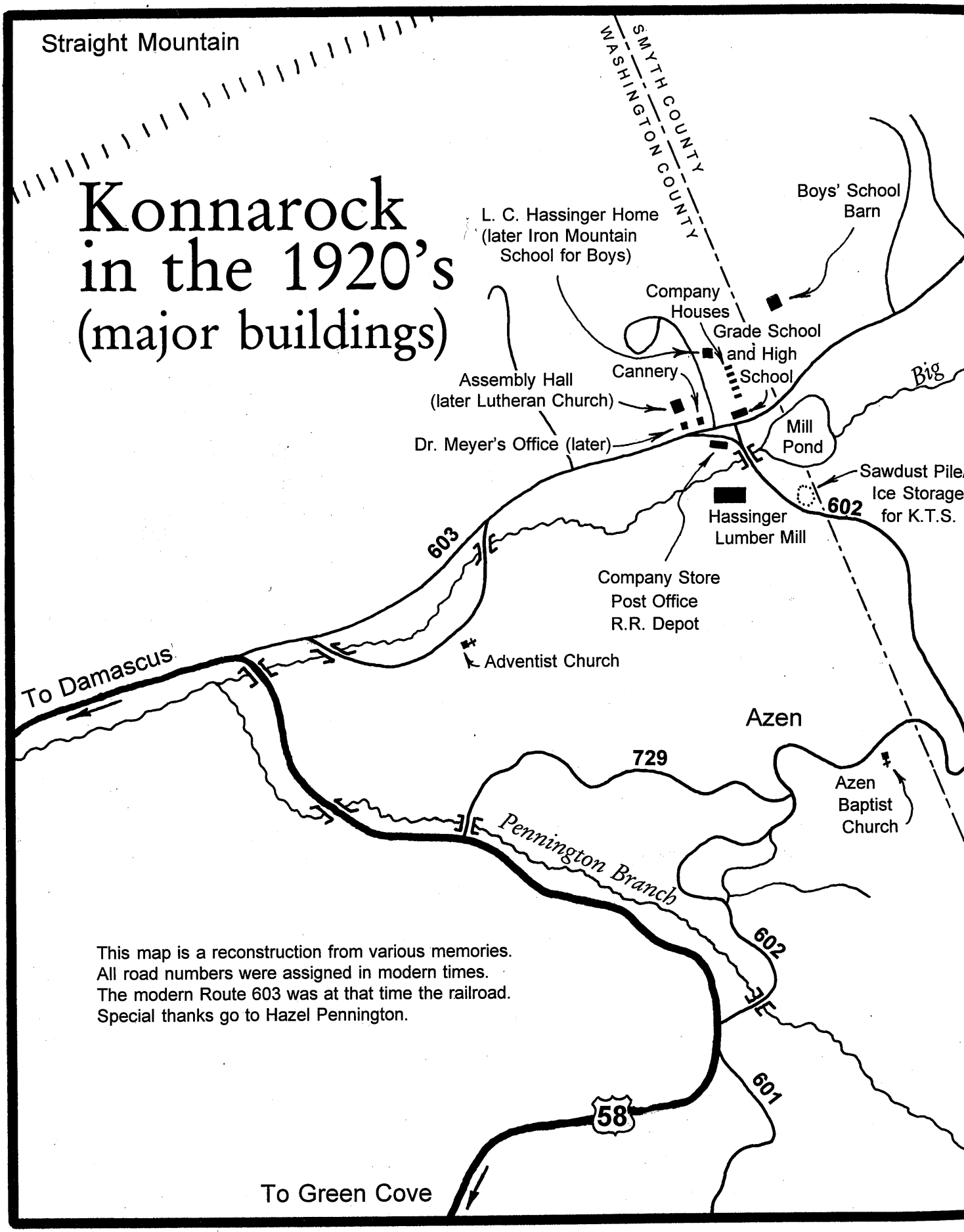
Carrington - I went to Konnarock. We moved from North Carolina in January of 1918; I had just turned six, so I went to my first school. Used to be right at the three story building. I finished high school there.

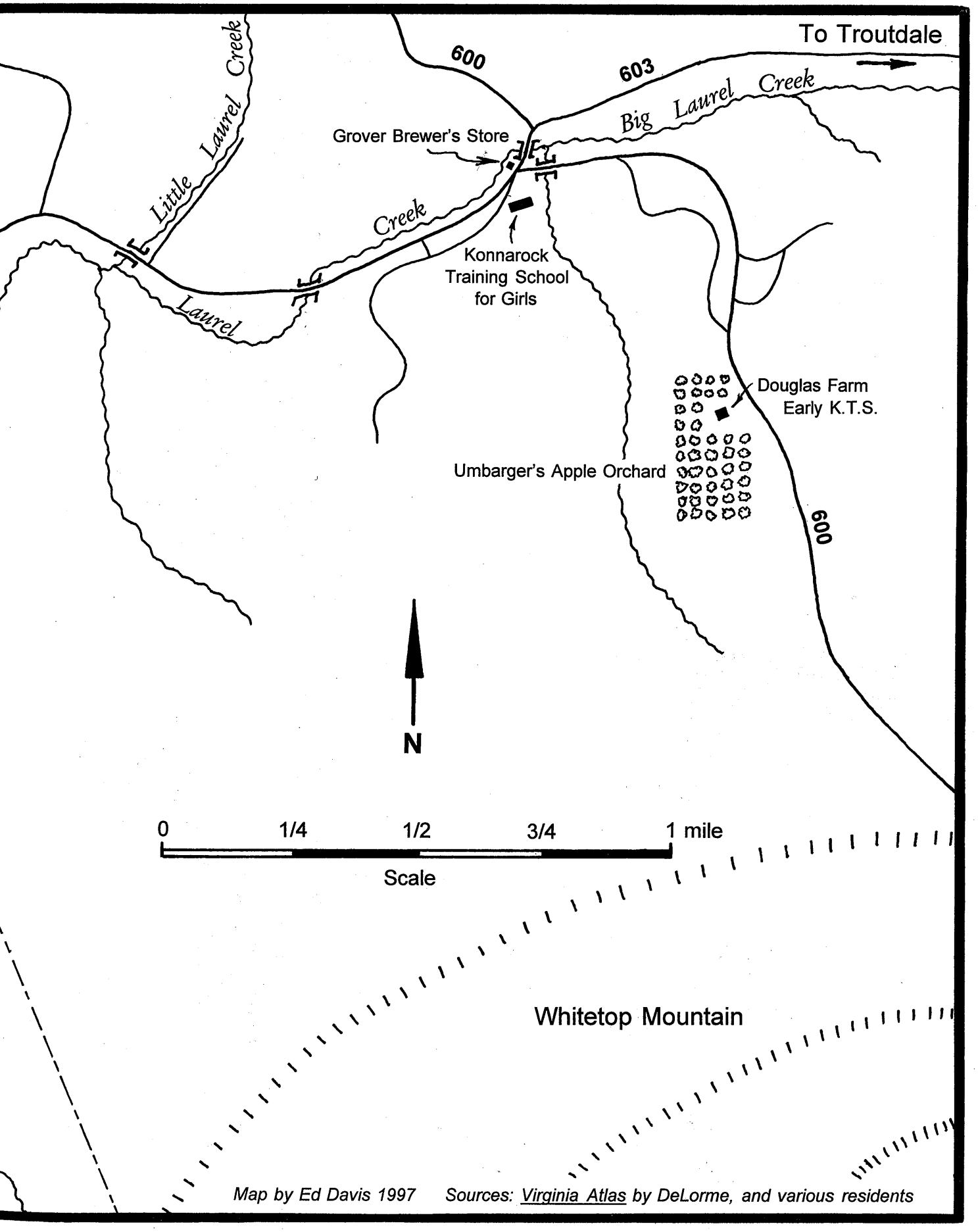
If you could describe the school, how would you describe what you did each day?

Carrington - We did the usual things that you do in school. Miss Sadie Ponwith was one of my teachers. She would walk down from the Training School. She majored in English, and she taught down at the high school like a lot of the teachers did.

And, at the Girls' Lutheran School, they would walk down here to the high school until it merged. When Hewett was here, the Boys' School and the Girls' School merged.

We had a principal that was kind of strict. Of course, I always tried to behave. We was taught at home to behave. They would tell us that if we got a spanking at school, we would get one at home.


Straight Mountain
SMYTH COUNTY
WASHINGTON COUNTY
Konnarock
in the 1920's
(major buildings)
L. C. Hassinger Home
(later Iron Mountain
School for Boys)
Boys' School
Barn
Company
Houses
Grade School
and High
School
Cannery
Assembly Hall
(later Lutheran Church)
Dr. Meyer's Office (later)
Big
Mill
Pond
Sawdust Pile
Ice Storage
for K.T.S.
602
Hassinger
Lumber Mill
603
Company Store
Post Office
R.R. Depot
Adventist Church
To Damascus
Azen
729
Azen
Baptist
Church
Pennington Branch
602
601
58
To Green Cove
This map is a reconstruction from various memories.
All road numbers were assigned in modern times.
The modern Route 603 was at that time the railroad.
Special thanks go to Hazel Pennington.


To Troutdale
600
603
Big Laurel Creek
Little Laurel Creek
Grover Brewer's Store
Creek
Konnarock
Training School
for Girls
Laurel
Douglas Farm
Early K.T.S.
Umbarger's Apple Orchard
600
N
0
1/4
1/2
3/4
1 mile
Scale
Whitetop Mountain
Map by Ed Davis 1997
Sources: Virginia Atlas by DeLorme, and various residents

Cordelia - I went here in Konnarock to school, the first schoolhouse that was ever built here. The building was two stories.

Bernice - I attended Konnarock School—it was up on the hill and it burned down later on. You could go through high school up here. The Company built the high school.

Why didn't you stay in school, Bernice?

Bernice - I really don't know. My parents didn't force me to go, and I guess I didn't want to go so I quit.

Roy - When I was about 6 or 7 I started at Konnarock School, and I only went a few years. I was out by the time I was a teenager.

Why didn't you stay in school?

Roy - I don't know, just one of those crazy things.

Denton - I went to Fairwood School, then Buckeye, Green Cove School, Whitetop Gap, and Troutdale Schools one year and part of a year in West Virginia. I finished at the Konnarock High School.

Robert - I studied up on what they called the Douglas Farm. They had the public school up there. Then the Training School, and I attended over here, too. There were about ten to fifteen families lived up there on the Douglas Farm, and Lizzy Umbarger taught school up there until the Training School came in. They had girls over there, and then they had a Boys School down at Konnarock.

How many students were in Lizzy Umbarger's and what grades were taught?

Robert - I guess she taught up to the seventh grade, and I guess there were 25 to 30 or more, all in one room.

In the '30s they built the schoolhouse up here on the Laurel. I didn't go to that one. That was more for people who lived up that way. I had finished up the seventh grade, and back then you had to pay to go to high school. First year it was $3 a month and the next it was $4 and the third year was $5 a month. That was the high school down in Konnarock. It was a public school, but you had to pay.

Could people afford that?

Robert - Not hardly back then. None of us went to high school. I went out on public work when I was 14, cutting timber.

J.D. - Well, I went to public school in Konnarock for about two years. Then the Adventists came in, and then I went to the Seventh Day Adventist School. I didn't go until about the 6th grade. Well, what we had to do, you know, back then. I tried to get in the CC camps when I was 15, but I had to quit school. My oldest brother, he went to CC camp. I had to do the plowing. I had to lay out of school to help get the crops in. Why, we had to lay out, so I quit.

Do you think the schools helped hold the community together?

J.D. - I think the Training School did. A lot of the kids came out of North Carolina and went to school there. The boys worked on that big farm. Back in there as you are going up on the lefthand side, they had a big cattle barn back there. They had apple orchards. After they started dropping down, the Waters bought the farm. They kept letting it go down and it went down like it is. It was a good barn; the houses were good.

You remember the Training School?

J.D. - Yes, I went down there two years. Juanita Carmack was my first teacher and she left, went up into Arlington Co. in '42 and retired. Her daddy was a professor at the public school in Konnarock.

Jean - I went to Konnarock Elementary. By the time I got through the 7th grade, they took the high school out. I went up to KTS as a freshman. I went to Damascus as Sophomore and Junior. Then I went back to KTS to graduate from Konnarock in 1959. I wanted to have a Konnarock ring, and my best girlfriend went up to the Training School. There was just seven of us in our graduating class.

Why did you change to Damascus?

Jean - You had more fun, I guess.

Boys?

Jean - Yes, they had a football team there.

How was the closure of the Lutheran Training School felt?

Jean - I think it was a big disappointment to the people. There wasn't a lot of people from here in Konnarock that went there in the later years. They knew it was there. It was a place you could go up to train. It was part of the community. I felt really bad when it left. You know, they always had a little something going on at the Girls' School that you could go to once in a while. They used to have their health clinic up there.

So there were a lot of problems with the closing of the school?

Jean - Daddy said he never did get out of the Primer. He would go to WV, and they would put him in the Primer, come back here and put him in the Primer. But he could read and write and had gorgeous handwriting and could do the figuring. He didn't have to have any paper. He was a kid then.

He should have been in school.

Jean - Yes, but they stayed all winter in WV. The father went there to work. He took the family. They went to school out there when there was school. Lots of times there wasn't any school. When they come back out here, they would start school. They always started him in the Primer. He never did get out of the Primer. He educated himself.

You were brought here as a 5-year-old orphan to the Training School, and they became your family. Did you go to church then?

Dora - They had that chapel and I was a Lutheran. They baptized me into the Lutherans. They were good to me. Then Kenneth Killinger came, and we had preaching there and down at Konnarock.

They were very strict on us at the school. We had to stay in the yard unless we had a teacher to walk with us. We played baseball a lot and basketball. They had a court up there where that old garage is. I loved baseball. I was a tomboy.

We were the "Little Gang." We would get together and talk and joke and carry on, I guess.

When I came down to the Training School, I was older. I stayed up at that one school for several years. When they built this Training School in 1925, they moved us all down there and got more girls to come to the school. There were as many as 44 at a time.

What school before the Training School?

Dora - You know where J. C. Price lives? There were only 7 students there when I first came to the school, but they called it a Training School. They didn't call it Konnarock Training School, but they named the big one that. I lived in the house. They had an upstairs where the girls roomed. Miss Smith took care of us. We had a nurse and a cook. They stayed with us.

Who ran the school at J. C. Price's?

Dora - Pliger Smith (a woman). She just died this past year. She was 92. She went from the Training School and made a professor at Hollins College.

I had a real good time at the Konnarock Training School. They taught me a lot of good stuff. Things that helped me in my marriage. They taught us how to can when we got older. We had a cannery in the basement of the big Training School. About 500 cans would go in this big pressure cooker. They taught us to string beans and break them up; canned cabbage. We had a big garden. The men would gather it up and we would can it. We would make apple butter. We had an orchard. We had a cooking class about twice a week, also a sewing class. We got to eat it after we cooked it. The high school girls did the canning. The girls that came in there to stay from North Carolina, they could bring food, potatoes, cabbage, molasses, anything like that to pay for the tuition. It cost $75 for 9 months. ... I stayed until I was 17.

In the summertime, they would let us go swimming behind where Earl Pennington lived. They had a swimming place. We had Bible School, and the teachers would go with us at night and we would swim at night. They had flashlights or lanterns. It wasn't far from the Training Schools. The Bible School teachers came from Pennsylvania and they loved to go swimming at ... night so the girls got to go.

And they had the Girl Scouts. I was in the Girl Scouts when I turned 10 years old. We would go on picnics.

Did you do any paid work as a teenager?

Dora - The only thing I did was in the summertime. They had people who would come and stay a week or two or three days and I was a waitress. What they tipped me is what I got. The Lutherans were paying my way, but I did my share of the work. I scrubbed the kitchen, washed dishes. They had one group that washed dishes; another group would wash the pans. Forty-four girls with dishes, not counting the teachers, was a lot. That's what we did to keep the Training School clean. They had wax that came out of cans. Some of them would wax and the rest of us would ride big rags to shine the hallway. I would sit down while some of them pulled me. The little ones would sit down on big rags, and the bigger girls would pull us. Every night we would have prayer. Then we had study hall at night. We had to be in bed by 9:00 p.m. Study hall was right before bedtime.

What schools did you attend?

Ella Mae - Well, I first went to the Konnarock High School. Then the Seven Day Adventist came and I went to their school. Then they took me out of that school, and I went up here to the Training School. But, I never learned nothing while I went up there. You see, we'd go to class during the day, but I'd never know nothing because of the night

the girls up there would do their homework and we—us outside girls and boys—didn't never have no homework to do. We was to go up there at night and do our homework, just like being in school. I don't remember us even having a book to study out of. So I quit up there and went back to the Adventist school.

Where was the Adventist School located?

Ella Mae - Where the Adventist Church is now. They built that and made a big school out of it. It was always full of children. The first school they ever had, you know where the little white house is, sitting over across the road from the church. That is where the first school was at, and well I don't know whether it was in that house or not, they might of had to build this house later. Ester Henderson and her father was the teachers at first.

We had a good time at the Adventist School. We didn't have sandwiches to take. They didn't have light bread back then. They all had to make biscuits out of flour. Us girls would take milk and bread in pint cans and we'd put cornbread in there, and we'd put it in the branch, let it be real cold, and boy it was delicious. Our parents made grape butter, apple butter and jams. We'd gather the wild grapes out. I'd take grape butter to school in my biscuits. The other girls loved it. We couldn't afford peanut butter ... 'cause there were too many of us. Them girls would bring peanut butter in their biscuits, and they would swap me peanut butter for my grape butter.

There was one teacher in the Adventist School and everybody was all in one room. When I went to Konnarock School, I went to Lizzy Umbarger. In the summertime, the boys would gather ramps and eat them to have bad breath. The teachers would either send them home or send them down to the creek and make them brush their teeth. I tell you that Wardie Pennington was something else. Him and John H. Blevins' boys.

Madge - Me and my oldest brother went to the Lutheran Training School for a while, but most of my schooling was at the Laurel Valley School. I left school after five years because nobody made me go, and I didn't think I had to.

Carrington - In 1959, the closure of the Lutheran Training Center really hurt the community. After Mr. Hewitt became the Superintendent, things really changed. The Boys' and the Girls' School merged. Ms. Dyer, the principal, left.

I liked Mrs. Twedten, a nurse. When my brother had scarlet fever and we didn't have a doctor then, she took care of him, under quarantine of course. But we had a doctor, Dr. Legard, come from Damascus certain times, and to the Training School certain times.

The Hassinger Co. doctor was gone. Mrs. Twedten and the nurse came down to the high school and talked to us. You know, about health problems and things. Later on we had Sister Sophie, and she helped us a lot. Later, Dr. Meyer.

Lloyd - I started out at school, Primer they called it at that time, the Training School, cause I lived right above it. ... went to school there until I finished grade school and went to Konnarock until I was 15. I would have graduated if I had gone on until I was 16, but I quit right in the middle and went off to Pennsylvania 'cause I wanted to work and make money and there weren't none around here. We had a big family, and we

just didn't have nothing to spend. People around here were going up to Pennsylvania. There was plenty of work up there.

Was there a library in Konnarock?

Gladys - Our church school had a wonderful library, and we had progressive class work similar to the scouts. We got a reading certificate if we read all the current books for our age group. These books were sent down to us from Washington, the conference headquarters. We did a lot of reading in our church school. I took all the grades in parochial schools except for 7th and 8th when I went to Konnarock School. I was very happy there, and then we started the 9th and 10th in our church school. I went there and then I went away to a Seventh Day Adventist boarding academy for high school and college.

What schools did you attend?

Thelma - I attended Konnarock.

And how did you get to school?

Thelma - Walked. Until high school. High school we went to Damascus.

And the bus picked you up then?

Thelma - Yes, but I still had to walk down here to the Circle from up at Azen.

Do you have any opinions on how the closure of the Lutheran Training School was felt?

Thelma - Well, some of my friends, like Wilma Shumate, attended there and, I guess, everyone that went to school there didn't like it when it was closed. I know my aunt went there, and my mother went there a very short time. And my Aunt Wadie Sturgill attended longer and she goes to every reunion they have. I think, myself, that it was bad. I guess it had to happen. I don't know if it closed because they didn't think the need existed any longer or what.

Thelma - I think the Lutherans had a big influence on the community. With Dr. Meyer they were instrumental in his being here. And I assume they were instrumental in Dr. Jan Gable being here. And Dr. David Tebbenkamp. All of them. And, too, with the cannery which I just always assumed was a Lutheran project.

The things they taught the children, it was a broader education in that they taught them to cook and to set the table which we didn't have until we were in high school in Home Ec. They probably taught some health care there also which we didn't get in public schools. I had a patient out of White Top, Eva Blevins Lindsey. She died not long ago. She talked a lot about the Konnarock Training School.

I always had the impression that the very local people, not too many of them from down this way, went up there. My mother and her sister lived up there on the Laurel and that wouldn't have been as long a walk as it would have been from down here up there.

John - The Lutherans put the Boys' School and the Girls' School together for a while, and then in 1960 they closed the schools because public schools had come in by that time and had taken over the education job. When they started the Boys' School and the Girls' School, there were no public schools available for the people, especially in the

outlying areas. The only schools were the county schools that were localized in the population centers.

Did you see some benefits of those schools when you got back in '74? Did you see people who had been trained there who still lived around here?

John - Yes, they have a reunion of the Girls' School and the Boys' School every year, and they still come and it's growing because of the children that come with them. It's usually around July 4. It used to be at the Girls' School building, but it's now at our community center.

Everett - I went to the Konnarock Training School. I started when I was 6, I guess, around '26 and went several years. I didn't do too good in school. Then I went to a one-room school up on, what we call "up on the Laurel," [on the upper end—Laurel Valley].

Helena - I started at the Adventist School when I was seven and I went through the 5th grade, and then I started in the public school over at Konnarock. Everett's mother went to school there, and all three of his sisters went to school there.

Do you remember people being sorry because they consolidated the schools, how that might have hurt Konnarock?

Helena - Yes, it did. The school bus ran from Green Cove and brought the kids out. I never did ride the bus because I lived close enough that we walked. What we call down on the lower end of Konnarock, they walked. Gibb Parker's kids walked from Creek Junction. Every one of those kids finished school.

Everett - They would get certificates for not missing school. They walked from the head of the Laurel as far back as you could go.

Where did you go to school?

Alice - Well, I went to the Seventh Day Adventist Church School until the 7th grade. That was as far as they taught. And I went to Konnarock High School. I didn't finish.

Have you got any good memories of what it was like to be in the Adventist School?

Alice - Yeah, it was good. We didn't do much. We played a lot of baseball and things like that at recess, and we had a lot of plays at the church.

The Bible was one of your subjects. I think it was the first subject in the morning. But other than that, it was just like any other school.

Can you remember any teachers that you liked?

Alice - Well, the first one I had was Andrew Fearing from Washington. I liked him. And the next one was Mark ... what was his name? Anyway, he was a Finley. I forget his first name; but, I liked him too. I liked all of my teachers.

Can you remember activities at the public school?

Alice - We played a lot of basketball. We went out some on the school bus to Damascus and Glade Spring. There was a school bus that ran from Green Cove to Konnarock. They had a bus because they didn't have a high school in Green Cove. This would have been in the late '30s and early '40s.

Lloyd - One February, when the weather was severe and school was canceled, I went across the bridge and the bus started spinning. And they just had boards laid across in a big high place. I took the kids off the bus and backed across the bridge. Then, I turned, put the kids back on and turned around and went home because I was afraid if I slipped backwards, the bridge was so narrow and the steel wheels stick over the side

of it. It was on dirt roads. People had started working over in Troutdale and Marion. They would wait until the bus went through to clear the road. I even went through the creek. I dragged into school with icicles dragging the ground off the side of the bus. The kids would be out there standing in that cold. None of them hardly missed a day or anything. Washington County would close school, but Smyth county roads were 10 times as bad but we never closed. We never wrecked or had any problems with kids.

I took all the Konnarock kids to Grade School, Sugar Grove, and picked up all the high school kids at Sugar Grove. They had me run a double trip on account of making me earn my money. I would go even when the snow was over the headlights, maybe 4 ½ feet off the ground.

Did you attend church as a child and where?

Jean - Yes, when I was small, we went to the Baptist Church at Azen, because my daddy was a full-fledged Baptist. My mother was brought up in the Lutheran Church. My grandmother was a member of the Lutheran Church. She never did change. I can remember really going to all the churches—the Lutheran Church, Bible School, Lutheran League, and all that stuff. There were no televisions or anything else to do so you went to whatever church was having church. We went to the services at any of the churches.

Elmer - I went to Azen Baptist Church over here on the hill. I went to Bible School some.

Ella Mae - After my father accepted the Sabbath at the Adventist Church, we went to church every Saturday, even walked down there barefooted when I was a child. Before that we would go to Azen—over there, you know, at Baptist.

So, Celia Jane Haga was an Adventist?

Ella Mae - Well, she wasn't at first, till they came in here and set up a tent meeting. And, then she joined the Seventh Day Adventist. They was all Baptist—that was all there was in here at first. I was baptized when I was 15 years old in the Adventist Church, and I've been a Seventh Day Adventist ever since.

What kinds of happy things do you remember from being a teenager?

Ella Mae - I was happy all the time.

Did you have friends? Boyfriends?

Ella Mae - Yeah, I had my boyfriends. Back then we would go to church. They come to church and walk us back home. That is the only place you had to go. Bud [was] the only man around here we knowed of that had a truck. Well, we all would go to the Adventist Church and he belongs to the Adventist, too. We had ... prayer meetings on Wednesday night and young peoples night on Friday night, and some kind of a meeting on Saturday. And we all would go to church. And, boy, when we got out that church, we would fly up this road (laughing). Our boyfriends would get a hold of us, and up this road we'd come a flying. Quick as Ellie Pennelton's truck got ready to pass us ... well, our daddy would make us get on the truck and we would have to ride the rest of the way.

You remember the church here ... and your children growing up? Did they go to church?

Mae S. - I took them to Sunday School every Sunday as long as I had them at home. I tried to raise them up right, but I think they all strayed away.

Did you help do any of the building on the log church?

Mae S. - No, now I didn't do much. I had a party—a measuring party. You pay so much an inch for every inch you was around. I made pretty good, I guess. Had something to eat. They had a pretty good crowd come. Mrs. Morris, she wouldn't measure. She was kind of like I was then, kind of heavy. She wouldn't measure. They just wrote a check.

Did that pay for the church?

Mae S. - No, that paid on it. It didn't pay for it. It paid on it. We had little games and played and had something to eat.

How did life change once you got here?

Mae S. - I joined a church in '35, got to go to church. I'd walk to Konnarock to church, the Lutheran log church.

Fairy - I didn't go to church much because I started having so many children. That's when the Seventh Day Adventists came up there in the late '20s. Well, my husband went to church every night, in a tent, but I couldn't go. I had two or three little children and you had to carry them. There was no cars. I would have liked to have went. I always did like the Adventists. I would have been ready for the Adventist Church at 8 years old if they would have took me in. They wouldn't take anybody in that young. And then I waited until my husband got ready to go to church where I went. We both joined the church together.

He came to Damascus from Bristol. They had a revival and my children all got saved. And they all would have went in the church. They all would have joined the church, but they believed in sprinkling. They didn't baptize by emersion, and I sort of hold to the emersion. Of course, several of my children have went into the Presbyterian Church since they got married. I've got a daughter and her husband lives in Glauser, Virginia. And they will baptize by emersion now in the Presbyterian Church.

Were you baptized by emersion?

Fairy - By emersion, yeah—back in that little creek up there at Konnarock. I was about 26, 27, something like that. I was baptized in a Church of God; but, I left it and went to the Seventh Day Adventist.

Did you know any really good preachers up in Konnarock?

Fairy - Yes, George Pennington was a good preacher. He was in the Baptist Church. But most everybody left Baptist and went to Seventh Day Adventist when they come up there. Cecil Sturgill was a good man. He always stayed with the Baptist church.

Were there a lot of revivals back then?

Fairy - Yes, but many people didn't go. Nearly everybody lived out in the country and had so far to walk.

Did you attend church as a child?

Essie - Oh yes, it was the Christian Association until the job went out, then the Lutherans came in, then the white church was called the St. Matthews Lutheran Church. Then they built the new one, which is up there now. That's where they go now.

When it was the Christian Association, what kind of preacher did they have?

Essie - Just different preachers—it was not any denomination. Anybody could come in and preach what they wanted to. Some came from Konnarock and some from out of Konnarock. I don't know if they had a regular pastor. Someone would just come in and preach. We had services on Sunday night. We had Sunday School that morning and came back at night for service.

Can you think of any organized activities in town when you were a child—any church or school, or ---

Essie - Well, there was church and school. Our class would have Sunday School picnics. Maybe a group of us—I guess, the Girls Club, would hike to Whitetop. We would go up the mountain with a chaperone and a woman, maybe his wife. We couldn't get up the cliffs so he would pull us up each cliff. If we would have slipped, we would have gone down that cliff.

How old would you have been?

Essie - Eleven, twelve, thirteen. The church sponsored clubs and activities for the children.

Did the Lutheran Church take care of some people who weren't making it?

Essie - Well, they probably did. They were real good about giving them work on the Lutheran farm.

You just go to the one you want to. I couldn't go to the Baptist Church unless some older people went too. You had to walk way up this mountain. When the Lutheran Church came in, it was in Konnarock, close, so I joined them, but I don't get to go much because I am down here now.

Which church did you go to?

Wardie - Laurel Baptist Church, Azen Church. The real name of it is Laurel Valley. Years ago, there wasn't any churches, then they brought Azen in. When the Hassinger Lumber Co. moved there, they put the church right near there.

When you were a child, did you go to Vacation Bible School?

Wardie - Oh, yeah! We played games ... shooting marbles. That was the biggest game there was.

Did you go to other things like Wednesday night?

Wardie - Oh, yeah. We went Wednesday and Thursday nights and first one thing and then another.

Was your mother a church going lady?

Wardie - Yes. Mother went to services on Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday night.

She went on Saturday night, too? What would be different about Saturday night service?

Wardie - I don't know. Same as Sunday mornings.

And where did you go to church as a child?

Carrington - We had a church. Well, it was really a community building, but we had church in it too. The old church ... up from where the fire hall is, up the holler—the Lutheran Church.

Were there other churches around then, when you were a young adult?

Carrington - There was a Baptist Church. There used to be one up at Azen. The old building was torn down, and they got a newer one in the same place. And the Adventists came in here.

Did the churches do things together?

Carrington - Well, we had church in what you would call a community building, and it was not really any denomination at that time. Later on it became Lutheran. But, you could belong to any church you wanted to. My parents was mostly Methodist. And, they would be able to tell you they were a whole lot like Lutheran.

Did you, when you were a child, go to some other activities like Vacation Bible School?

Lloyd - Well, we had Bible School. We had to go one or two days a week. We had Bible School in the morning before we had school. It was a Lutheran Girls' School, but they allowed us to go because we were about their age. They had church there all the time, of course, and then they had another Lutheran Church down the road and then they had Baptist churches, two or three of them around. Everybody would go to church. If they had to walk ten miles to go to church somewhere, they'd go.

They all get in one little group. When they get there in the church, the preacher goes to please that group. He then gets away from the Bible. When he gets up there and preaches the way this little group wants him to preach, I'd just as soon stay at home. I never belonged to a church in my life. Of course, I'd go some. But, I went to school ... had Bible, Chapel forced on you. I always went to Sunday School on Sunday and church on Sunday night, then even on Wednesday nights. Everybody went back then because there wasn't anywhere else to go. Even if they walked for miles, they still came. I know people were a lot better off then.

There was no Seventh Day Adventist Church, so were you attending a church?

Bernice - Azen Baptist.

What made you leave that one and join the Seventh Day Adventist?

Bernice - Because we believe in the Bible, and we believe that the Bible says that the seventh day is the Sabbath. ... We accepted the Sabbath, so we left the Baptist Church and joined the Adventist Church. Their doctrine to us was a lot different. We believe in a resurrection and judgment. They believe that when you die you go straight to heaven or straight to hell.

Were you part of the group that said we are going to do this, or did the Seventh Day Adventist get started and you joined them?

Bernice - My uncle, my father's brother moved away from here and went to Washington State and homesteaded there. When he was there a while, he got to writing to my father and told him that he had joined the Seventh Day Adventist Church. He sent him some literature. After 15 years of him being there and writing to my father, he decided to come home. He rode on the train and there were no cars or anything up here so they met down at Creek Junction and he brought him home. And while he

was here about a year, he went to several homes and had prayer meetings. My father pretty much got to believing in the doctrine of the Seventh Day Adventist, so when he went back he wrote to the conference and told them he had an interest here and would they send a minister. Then in a short time, a minister came here and he asked to have meetings in the Baptist Church, which they allowed him to start. But, when he preached on hell, we don't believe in everlasting burning hell. We believe we are burned according to our deeds, and we give an account for what we have done. But, we don't believe in millions and millions of years like they do. They disagreed with us, and they stopped the meetings. He went back and brought a tent and this whole country went to the tent meetings, and there was about 80 came out of the church.

The first baptism they had us five girls baptized. We believe in immersion. We were baptized in a little stream up here.

What kind of organized activities did you go to when you were children?

Bernice - We went to Sunday School at the Baptist Church. My dad was the superintendent. He was an old time school teacher.

Gladys - He taught the same Sunday School class for 40 years. We were the only church that had a Friday night service.

Were there other occasions that churches got together back then?

Bernice - No, not much. When the Adventists first came here, people were terribly prejudiced, because they were keeping the Sabbath instead of Sunday.

Can you think of any particular cases where people disagreed between churches?

Bernice - Lily Rhymer hung out a little bit of clothes on the line on Sunday, and her brother-in-law brought a load of wood on a sled to the Adventist Church, because we were out of wood and we wanted to have prayer meeting that night. They arrested both of them over that. Lily was crippled, and I went down and bonded her out. I don't know who bonded the other one out. His name was General Rupard. He had took just a little bit of wood on a sled over to the church.

Was there a judge there that found them guilty or not guilty, or how did it end?

Bernice - They threw it out of court.

On the whole, most churches get along but they don't really connect that much, right?

Bernice - They have their own congregation now and do what they want to, and if I want to go to another church I can go.

Gladys - I think every revival that the other churches have, we are always invited.

In the past was it true that if there was a tent revival people just ignored denominations and all went?

Bernice - Right after they stopped using the Baptist Church, whenever we preached on hell. They mix now, and we will go to their meetings and some will come to ours.

Gladys - The churches are more tolerant now.

Bernice - When we had the young peoples' meeting on Friday night, all the young people in the community came. The Lutherans had a Training School up here where they boarded boys. They all came and they got their girlfriends down there.

Gladys - After our church was organized, they started out having young people's meeting on Friday night. That was the social event of Konnarock from the time I can remember. Everybody, every denomination ... Probably in the early '30s. That's where the girls got their boyfriends. They walked back with them from church. The Seventh Day Adventist Church sponsored these activities, but all the denominations went. That was the social event at Konnarock. The church was full—about 75. Parents went too but the young people did all the presentations. The young people were the ones who told stories or read stories and did poetry and did special music, and they were the leaders too.

J.D. - My father joined the Seventh Day Adventist Church. A lot of people didn't care for the Adventists; yet, it was a trying time for them to go through. There were some people who did not associate with the Adventists; and today, there are those who don't want to associate with the group.

Thelma - I attended the Azen Baptist Church, but my experience with churches is limited. About all I knew was what was going on at Azen Church when I was very young. And then as a teenager, I'd spend a lot of weekends in Damascus. I had a lot of friends there and they were different. My very best friend was Lutheran. And then I had a friend that was Methodist. I mean we were all friends, so we had kind of round table churches at that time.

What about back in the '30s, when you were a boy, did they have a lot of church sponsored things like revivals?

Roy - Yes, they had revivals around everywhere. People would go to different ones, and that seemed to please them.

Do you think churches are a big part of life in Konnarock? Is it different now or is it pretty much the same?

Roy - Pretty much the same, not a lot of change.

Denton - We attended Azen Church. Now, in West Virginia, we didn't go. We were back in the mountains. We always attended Azen Church. We went to Green Cove Church when we lived in Buckeye. We had an awful good church.

From '36 to '39, when you were here, did you see improvements?

John - They were very responsive to the gospel message. They had previously had their own churches, Baptists for the most part, but there was also a Seventh Day Adventist Church which has since grown and is building a new building here now. Very nice people, very evangelical, a gospel minded people. The pastors they had were mountain grown and mountain educated, and they just came up and started preaching like Killinger did, so they did not have much schooling.

Did you feel like people accepted you despite your being different, being highly educated, a Northerner?

John - I think they did. They were sorry to see me leave when we finally left. It was a little rough getting going, because I was different from them and had a different style of running a church. I had tried to make it, not like a city church, but have some of the things that city churches do have. That made it kind of a struggle. There was no real friction. They had had some contact with the Lutheran Church, and the Lutheran teaching before that, and there was a nucleus of people who were raised Lutheran as

over against Baptist. You can tell the difference there, which we didn't have any revivals or tent meetings. Well, Killinger put on a tent meeting just to beat that situation. He put in a tent and brought preachers from the cities, from New York and Philadelphia, to come in and preach. Usually at the end of that meeting they had some conversions and some baptisms. Then we started Vacation Bible Schools and that took up quite a bit of my time. We had as many as 15 Vacation Bible Schools in the little churches that Killinger had established around here.

When you were the pastor from '36 to '39, about how many people attended?

John - We had quite a crowd because we had the Girls' School and the Boys' School in it. We had a church full every Sunday. I would say 50, a good size then, but I don't know how it compared in size to the meetings they had. Of course they were more concentrated in a summertime revival meeting where they would bring in visiting pastors and have services every night for a week or two. Of course, I had three church services every Sunday. I preached at the Boys' School chapel every other Sunday and every other Sunday at the Girls' School chapel and in between I went over to Fairwood toward Troutdale and preached in a little church over there. We only had a handful of people there. Some of them are still going. Their revivals were great, but the rest of the year wasn't so much.

Your Vacation Bible School, was it a one week?

John - Two week. We had young folks from all the churches, and we had teachers who came from other churches in the country. They just came here to spend two weeks of their vacation to teach Bible School in the mountains.

Did they use Hassinger facilities for Vacation Bible School?

John - No, those buildings were church buildings that Kenneth Killinger had gotten built by the labor of the people and money that he had raised from churches that he would go visit every year and tell them about the need for the work. He would raise enough money to buy the lumber, and the people would put up the church.

John - There were all these little churches around that are still in existence. The Adventists came in and a lot of Lutheran people have become Adventist. Their religious philosophy is almost the same as ours, but some things are different like worshiping on Saturday instead of Sunday. We get along very well. At that time there was a little stress between the Adventists and the Lutherans, because the Lutherans were quite different from the Adventists' idea and different from the Baptist idea.

I had problems introducing infant baptism. They didn't like the idea of using just a little water. They thought the only real baptism was to be baptized in the creek.

Can you tell me a story of some reactions of people to that?

John - Bill could tell you about that. He came here before we did in '71, and so he was a pastor of a church. He had a reception of members to which some were baptized in the creek and some were baptized by water at the church, but both became members of the Lutheran Church.

When you were here in '36, that would not have happened?

John - I don't know. Somebody asked me once where I got that water I used to baptize the children. They said, "Did you get it out of a spigot?" And, I said, "yes." They

thought I should have gone down to the creek and dipped up creek water and brought that up to baptize the children. I baptized a whole family up at Fairwood from the little children through the adults all at one church service. We had a little revival up there. Pastor Killinger came up there and preached every night for two weeks, and then we continued another two weeks of Bible School. That was where I gave them instruction in the fundamentals of Christianity. Killinger actually preached a sermon and then put out an invitation to come forward. A lot of them did, and those people were baptized as adults. They had not been taught in the Baptist heritage, and they are still members of the church. They still have their little certificate I gave them.

You say the community is largely kept alive as a community by the churches?

John - Yes.

Were there some elders in the church—people who took on responsibility of the Azen Baptist Church?

Blaine - Yes, there were several of the older men. They are all gone now. They were dependable. You could always call on them. Brother Tom Reedy, Brother Kenny Roop, and Brother Jack Miller were some of them. There were more. They were very dependable men. If I couldn't be there, they'd take a service.

You preached up there until the 60's, late 50's?

Blaine - Yes, in the late 50's. Then I was away from there for a while and went back to Konnarock Church in the 60's.

When you were in Konnarock, did you feel it was a tight-knit community?

Blaine - There were some other religions there that didn't cooperate—the Adventist people. They were kind of separate. There was always the Adventists, the Lutherans, and the Holiness people. They were always respectful to me. I went into their buildings to speak. They stayed to themselves.

How many churches would you say were in Konnarock when you went in there?

Blaine - Four. Two Baptist churches and one, the Lutheran, the log church. Have you seen it? You should drive up there sometime. They built the stone church first, then built the log church out of hand-hewn logs, even the pulpit. Lots of people have weddings there. In the summer time, they still have some services there. There was also the Adventist Church.

What about the Holiness Church?

Blaine - They went to people's homes. No building. Many of them came to our church regular like.

Any other churches, like Methodists, etc.?

Blaine - Not that I know of. The Lutherans were a strong group - they did a lot of work. They did not attract many members. I spoke in their Rock Church several times. It sits out there empty. They have a parsonage, too. There just isn't enough people. They drive out to the churches they want to go to. Many people just quit going to church.

Was Konnarock a better place when everybody was going to church?

Blaine - Yes. It is not any better. If people say they are going to do something, they will. Their word is good. Today, tragically, it is not that way.

Did you ever run any of those Vacation Bible Schools they used to have?

Blaine - Yes, we always did. I enjoyed working with young people. I sowed some seeds. That was always an outstanding work in my churches. We ordered regular literature and had a theme. We ran for two weeks. Later we changed to one week. I had a heart operation and had to quit. I have to be very careful.

You just don't know why you came to Konnarock. God must have had a reason.

Blaine - Yes, I had no intention of living in Virginia. It was the work of the Lord. Virginia has been good to me. It was God's will. I would have stayed in North Carolina. That church in Azen was good to me. After I left, people came to see me. I did go back to Green Cove a second time. Azen wanted me back, too.

Why didn't you go back there, too?

Blaine - I had other work. I had to preach where God wanted me. I had to stay in the Lord's will.

Wilma - I think religion in the last 20 years has divided this area, but when somebody becomes ill all our differences are left behind and everybody pitches in to help. When I was small, we went to the Baptist Church, its Vacation Bible School, and Christmas play. And, the members of the Baptist Church attended our church and functions.

Did you go to church as a child?

Nervie - Yes. When we got big enough, we could walk and go ... over to Azen, three or four miles.

Did you go to church as a child?

Robert - Yes, over here to the Training School and over to Azen.

What did you do here, and what did you do at Azen?

Robert - We would go to Sunday School here and they would have a revival or something, and we would walk over to Azen.

What other things did churches do in the general life of the community ... besides having services?

Robert - If folks needed food or something like that, they would prepare food, clothing. They would just do general work and help, just like a family. The whole community was like a family back then. We didn't have crime then like today. You hardly ever heard about anybody getting arrested—maybe one or two over whiskey or something like that. You never thought about locking up your house. As a community, they had respect for one another. If someone did see somebody breaking in, they would go and try to stop them.

Helena - I went to the Lutheran Church and I went to the Baptist Church. There wasn't anything in the community then. The school would have plays and they would charge 10 cents. There wasn't anything in the community to do. You went to church and everybody went to each other's church. You walked and when you come back from church ... there would be a crowd of you laughing and talking.

Everett - That was where we went to meet the girls.

Helena - I went to all of them. I enjoyed going to all them because I learned different things.

What sorts of things and activities did you get involved in when you were real small?

Carrington - We had programs of different kinds for children, and they would have movies and picnics and different things like that. And, they would have the Chatauqua come in

and have big entertainment and things. Of course, we had to pay; but, that was all right. It was very interesting and educational.

Did you do any sports?

Carrington - I didn't, but some of the others did. I enjoyed watching them ice skating on the Mill Pond. At least, I can remember the grownups ice skating a lot, and they would have lights and things for the Mill pond. The mill, you know, was down there. And, they would go down there and skate at night.

What kind of social events did you do as a teenager?

Carrington - We had movies and parties, Halloween parties, and different things. Some of the neighbors and friends would have Halloween and Christmas parties. And, there was roller skating in that building. That was a long time after Hassinger had gone. I remember Kenneth Hewitt roller skating there. It was when they had Odd Fellas Hall. We skated on the third floor, on a wooden floor.

My brothers liked to play basketball and things of that sort. They did have baseball one time, too.

Do you have some recollection of the Whitetop Folk Music Festival?

Carrington - Makes me sound like bragging. You know Garland Patton. He was a guard up there during the festival, and Mrs. Roosevelt was there. I was up there during the festival. And, Howard and Blaine, my brothers, had a band. Howard played the violin; Blaine played the guitar. They were called the Wyatt Brothers Band. And they won. They gave them a certificate. The picture of Howard said "famous left hand fiddler." He turned the violin upside down to play. He had to reach over some of those strings; ordinarily the bass is on top. Well, he turned it upside down. I remember some of that festival. They had some cottages that some of the people stayed in. They had the one that Mrs. Roosevelt was in.

Tell me about the Fall Festival.

Lloyd - They had people come up there. ... they had a great big building with a get together place. They got log cabins all over the place and rented them out. And they had a great big place covered with tarpaulin—I guess about 500 foot square. There was enough people come up there just on the weekends so the place would be full. There would be church groups sometimes. Saturday nights they had dances. I know in 1933 there was 40,000 people up there.

The year that Eleanor Roosevelt showed up. What was the name of the resort, your father's resort?

Lloyd - They just called it White Top; well, they called it the White Top Folk during the festival month. Otherwise, it was just White Top Mountain, and everybody knowed where it was at. And they came from all over the United States and everywhere in the world.

Did you ever see Eleanor Roosevelt up there?

Cordelia - Yes, I shook the hand of the ugliest woman I ever seen.

You shook Eleanor Roosevelt's hand?

Cordelia - I was kind of dreading to meet the First Lady of the land. They wouldn't let me go up to the lodge during the festival because Andrew had to be sheriff up there, keeping the peace, and I had to watch the money that was coming in. I had to stay at the gate and couldn't go up there. Andrew ran up against the front gate and waved for me to

come out there. When I went out there and seen that ugly face in the back of that car, I laughed. They didn't know what in thunder I was laughing about. I pretended it was something on the ground I was laughing about.

Essie - When I joined the Girls' Club, we went on picnics and went places. Some places I liked more. We got more out of it than what they do now, I'd say. And it was all clean fun.

There were so many young people at Konnarock—marshmallow roasts and picnics to attend. In 1932, there was a nice pavilion over there. We could have picnics and square dances there.

My husband was a left-handed fiddler.

In 1930,when you graduated from high school, did you start dating him pretty soon?

Essie - No, he was just a friend, just like any other boy in the group. First thing, you know, our friendship got a little stronger and we got married in 1936. We'd go to Whitetop to have square dances there. We always had a chaperone—a fully-grown person went with us. We'd get there in a truck.

Tell me something about Whitetop Folk Fest.

Essie - The Girl Scouts walked there. We had a leader or chaperone or I couldn't have gone. That's when they had to pull us up the cliffs. I would ride up with some of the girls to go to the Festival. It was another thing my husband took a part in because he entered the contests.

Did you go the year that Eleanor Roosevelt came?

Essie - Yes, I believe my dad went that year too. He got to see her.

I took to music, on my dad's side. We got a piano.

How old were you when you got your piano?

Essie - Where is my picture? I played the organ too. I played the pump organ. I was pretty close to 5 years old when I got interested in music. I played one hand and sang. I don't guess I made a tune then. We had the round stool, you could roll it up or you could roll it down. You had to pump both feet in the organ. I couldn't do that; I could just pump with one foot. I would take this top part off and sit on this little thing where it fit on so I could pump and reach up with one hand. And, I would sing as I go along. I was really interested in it. Dad told me after I learn how to play that I will get you a piano. I was only about five. I didn't have much experience with a piano. I stayed at it. He ordered me a piano from the Cornish Company. I don't know where he got the information about it, but he ordered me one from New Jersey. It came up to Konnarock to the depot on a freight. I guess it took 4 or 5 men to put it on a wagon and pull it up there. We lived up there on a hill. It was real heavy. They put it in the house. It stayed there until I left Konnarock. It took so many men to carry the thing. They liked to never got it up the steps the second time. Every place you moved, you had steps. They took it from Konnarock to Norton. My brother said he hurt his back trying to help with it. We moved again in Norton, up to a bigger house, and it had steps all the way up, then a little flat to the porch. It would be too hard to get it in. We left it sit in the first house in Norton, and the people who moved in bought it. I could have cried. I was parting with part of my life. This was in the '30s, I guess.

What kind of organized events or activities did you do as a child besides going to church?

Ella Mae - They would have little movies down there and parties and things and all of us kids would go down there to them. I remember one time they had a movie on, and we were all sitting there watching it. This train came down and around, on the picture—you know—and everybody thought it was going to run over them. After that, they served ice cream to the children. They gave my brother Bill a cone of ice cream, and he thought it was butter. He took a big bite off it and it liked to have froze him to death. Cause we didn't have anything like that, that's the only thing I can remember ... in Konnarock.

How about sports?

Ella Mae - We played basketball. There wasn't nobody that played basketball but the girls. The boys never played. They played, you know, baseball.

Was there a library or any place where you could go and get books?

Ella Mae - Not that I know of. I don't know where it would be at. Unless it would be up in the high school. It could've been there but I never did go get books. I guess that's the reason I can't read today.

When you were a teenager, were there more social events going on that you attended or pretty much the movies?

Ella Mae - I remember one or two movies that we went down there at the Lutheran Church. And then they got the roller skate in the top of the church, in one room or somewhere. After the Lutherans came in here, there was more places for the children to go and things like that.

Wardie - Hassinger Lumber Co. built a theater in Konnarock. The Friday night silent movies were a big thing.

Jean - When I was a senior at KTS, the girls had a basketball team. We played Mt. Rogers. By the time I got big enough to play ball, the Konnarock High School was gone. They had a real good ball team. They used to also have a real good baseball team. That was before my time. I can't really remember anything that was organized here in Konnarock except the Lutheran League.

All of us kids would get up on what used to be called the Goat Boundary, up above the old Boys' School. We had a big bonfire and a long bobsled that held 12 or 14 of us. We would get out there and sleigh ride. Some nights we would hit a tree, but that was a lot of fun.

We would have a square dance or something every Saturday night at the KTS. That was a big thing for us. When I was a senior, we had a fashion show once. We had a senior play.

How about music? Was there anything done in the community or school with music?

Jean - Well, I can remember they would have lots of country music entertainers come to the old high school, Konnarock, on Friday nights. Many groups came from around the area. The Ralph Stanley guys and the Carters came. It cost the students $.25. That was at the Konnarock High School. They used to have something up there nearly every week when the school was going good. One did horse tricks. He brought that horse up those two flights of steps, right up to the auditorium. The horse would count. After the high school went out, when I was in elementary—sixth or seventh grade—we would rent movies. They would send off somewhere and get movies. We

would show them on Friday night. I helped David crawl under the projector. It cost $.15 to get in. That was up here at the old Konnarock school building. I don't think it lasted over a year. There wasn't many people who could work the projector and the film would break. I can remember some of the movies we saw. They were westerns—Roy Rogers and Dale Evans—and all that kind of thing. We saw "A Million Years BC." I never will forget that movie. It was so scary.

Jean - They had a baseball game down there on Sunday, Blacks vs. Whites. That was a big deal. The whole place would be full. That is what you did on Sunday afternoon.

So the Blacks were all on one team, and the Whites on the other? Was there any racial tension?

Jean - No, it wasn't. I can't remember if it was. I just know that everyone couldn't wait till Sunday for the baseball game. That goes for the players and the black guys.

What were some of the happiest things that you did as a child?

Mae S. - Back then there was no place to go. You had to stay at home. Your parents kept you at home then. There wasn't anything going on to go to anyway.

What was considered play?

Mae S. - We had dolls. Get out and make a play house. Now, we never had much like young ones do today. We didn't have all of these toys to play with.

Did people come to visit you?

Mae S. - Yes. Always had plenty of company. They would come from Pennsylvania or Fairfax. I had 18 here overnight one night.

Besides the Mothers' Club, did you get together with mothers or any of the neighbors in any other way?

Mae S. - Not usually. Sometimes ... the young'uns of the neighbors would come, 5 or 6 or more. They called it a tea party, but they never had tea. They would just get together and we would have something to eat. They would eat and I thought that was nice. I got where I couldn't get out too much though. They'd come about once a month.

What about sports?

Bernice - They got together and they played all kinds of games. Part of them were outdoors and part indoors.

Gladys - As I grew up we would gather at people's houses on Saturday night. We would make candy and we would play games. We would play "Drop the Handkerchief" and "Red Rover." Boys and girls played those games together.

How did you play as a child?

Thelma - Well, we played on the farm. We played mostly with just whatever was around. I remember one time I wanted a basketball and ... goal but didn't have one, so I took the bottom and the top out of a tin can and made a ball out of two socks—one stuck down in the other one and was sewn together. It worked very well, you know, for shooting, but it didn't bounce. And, of course, we had dolls and things like that. But, I liked to take cardboard boxes and make houses. I made doll furniture out of thread spools and paper and cardboard, things like that. We had fun.

I did some—a lot more, I guess, than children do now. Enough to where it was a real treat when you had a book, you'd sneak off. In the summertime, you'd sneak off to the orchard under a tree to read on a Sunday afternoon and not come home until time to eat. That was one of my favorite things to do. I'd check out from the school library three or four books on weekends to make sure I wouldn't be bored

after church. We didn't usually do anything unless it was absolutely necessary on Sunday, a day of rest.

You could play, but we had a little more idle time. During the week, you're going to school and then when you come home in the evening, you're working until time to get your homework.

Basketball was new, especially for the girls. I thought it was so interesting—the outfits they wore, because around here people thought it was a woman couldn't wear shorts.

What did you do for fun?

Roy - We had plenty of entertainment, like molasses boiling, cake walks, and different things. You had church mostly on the weekends, because through the week you worked.

Did you hunt?

Roy - Yes, squirrels, rabbits, and pheasants. I also fished. There wasn't any such thing as stocking. This water used to be deep. But then they cut all that timber out and that sort of dried it up. People would go and catch a mess and maybe wouldn't go back for a month or so. Now you buy a license and they fish every minute they can and catch every one they can.

Denton - Konnarock had a good high school basketball team. The girls and boys were both good. One year they were top winners in the county.

I heard rumors about what went on in the Assembly Hall, even roller skating?

Yes, and dances were held in the basement. All kinds of things went on there. They brought in shows like Chatauqua and musicians. Kids could get into the movies for $.10. The older ones paid $.15.

What about a musical concert? Would the fees be the same?

Denton - It would be what the musicians charged. I know the Chatauqua tickets were $2.50. They were there one week, and you could go every night for $2.50.

If you could relive an experience from your childhood years, what would it be?

Robert - Just growing up. I was healthy, and there were a lot the same age. We would go fishing or go making a swimming pool. We would get out here and play marbles, pitch horseshoes, or go hiking or camping.

How about local grocery stores? What kind of things happened there?

Robert - They had a couple of stores. Umbarger's had a little store for his hands when he had that farm, and two or three had grocery stores. They would have like a barrel of salt pickles, and people would go in and get a pickle and talk or play checkers. Sometimes they would have music.

J. D. - Everyone helped shuck the corn. We played games—"Find a Red Ear." On Saturdays, we would go to ball games. When I attended Konnarock School, I really enjoyed the games. When we had heavy snows, we rode our sleds and tires. After we got bigger we would take an old car that had been stripped down, and a whole bunch of us would get somebody with a horse and pull it up to the top of Elk Garden and then ride that thing back off.

Did their parents have anything to do with school?

Dora - They had PTA meetings. The women belonged to the PTA, and Miss Twedten taught them how to take care of their babies and stuff.

Who were the leaders in the community during that time?

Dora - Really not anybody. Kenneth Killinger was really the only leader around the churches. He would go visit the people through here. People tended to their own business pretty much. They would go visit on Sunday evening and walk from one house to the other.

Mae S. - We used to have a Mothers' Club. All of the mothers would go and have a big meal. We just talked and carried on, had a nice evening.

Carrington - We all worked together and helped each other. We had a Mothers' Club. The Club members helped the sick people in the community. Mrs. Hassinger took a great hand in things like that. She was a former teacher. I believe that the Hassingers were interested in people getting an education because of Mrs. Hassinger's background. *I remember seeing a little photograph, little thing called a gazebo down the road, right at the bottom next to the cannery..*

Carrington - Oh, I forgot about that. It's where the community center was. I think the company built that as a garage at the time. They would rent it out to who would rent it. And then later on, I guess, ... they had the cannery in it. And, my father did part of the boiler. And Mrs. Poff was a Home Economics teacher, and she was in charge of the cannery. The whole community would come to the cannery with its things and help each other.

What sort of things were going on when you were a teen?

Carrington - I remember the Sunday School class. Our principal was the Superintendent of the Sunday School for a long time. They would have nice treats ... they had the Odd Fellas and all that. My brother belonged to the Odd Fellas. The Odd Fellas Hall was on the second floor of the community building. All of the people would donate money for the Sunday School treats.

What would happen if there was a family who seemed to not be able to do for themselves?

Carrington - The workers, everybody would get together, and the Mothers' Club would all help.

What kind of things did they do?

Carrington - The things that people needed—take them food or go in their home and help them.

Was that just if people were temporarily laid up or something, and they needed help; or, did they do that for people who just didn't seem to be able to ever help themselves?

Carrington - They would keep helping them. And each worker would give them money or something and help them along.

Elmer - We go to the Community Center for dinner.

Robert - Stuart Umbarger organized the Boy Scouts. I was 9 or 10 when I joined. Our troop met once a week or once a month. We would camp on Whitetop. We learned how to tie knots and we learned the names of trees.

Were there any other activities centered around what the Hassingers started—social activities or music events or dances?

Robert - No, they didn't. All that sponsored them were the schools. We would have the Carter family when they first started out. It would raise money for the schools. We also had Halloween parties. The Hassingers were just interested in the lumber business.

Was there a volunteer fire department in the early days of Konnarock? What happened when something caught fire?

Robert - Everybody would just drop everything and go help fight it.

Alice - Well, back then on Friday night we had what we called Young People's Meeting at the Church, every Friday night. And each one took part in it. Each would read something or say a poem or something like that.

Was it a fun time?

Alice - Oh, yes. I think JD came and stood outside the church.

J.D. - Back then, people did look out after people. The majority did.

Alice - Oh, yeah. I remember when they had what they used to call Corn Shucking and invite everybody. It would last all night. Whoever they were shucking for would fix a big meal like chicken and dumplings.

Midnight meal?

Alice - Yeah, fix a big meal for them, because they'd shuck corn all night.

Everett - We had a Light Brigade. We had a lot of things. We had fairs and a lot of things up there at that school.

Can you remember anything about the Light Brigade?

Everett - All I know is we raised things and done things for, I don't know whether it was for the poor or what it was. I guess we was poor people but we didn't know it.

Do you remember people reacting to floods or what people might have done? If you heard this week that a flood happened, what would you picture the community doing about it?

Gladys - The first thing I would do would be call our Adventist Development Association, and they would get a van in here and make sure people had food and blankets.

That's the same kind of thing that has been going on for decades in this community.

Gladys - We have our Community Association; we have our building. Any time there's a death, after the funeral, the women in the community cook. We take food up and feed the family after the funeral. We take food to the house, and we also take food to the Community Association to feed the family as soon as the funeral is over.

Does it matter what denomination?

Gladys - No.

When you were in Konnarock, did you participate in any group activities as a child?

Thelma - No, I don't recall anything when I was really young. When I was in high school, 4-H. They started a little 4-H group out at the Green Cove Community Center, but it didn't last very long. We didn't have a lot of automobiles back then and, you know, to transport children back and forth.

In high school, what sort of organized events were there?

Thelma - Well, we had sports, but, I'm not very good at sports. I belonged to several clubs. We had the Library Club, the Home Ec Club. I believe we had 4-H.

Gladys - Now we have a volunteer fire department and rescue squad. They have three organized events each year. We just had the Molasses Festival about a week ago; in May, the Ramp Festival, and in March, the Maple Syrup Festival. Those are the main fund raisers for the fire department and the rescue squad. They are the most dedicated bunch of young men you've ever seen. Sometimes they may stay here and talk an hour.

Wardie - My grandpa made a lot of liquor. He hired people to make it.

Did they make it right there in Konnarock?

Wardie - Oh, yes. There was a lot of violence.

Did he use a gun on anybody?

Wardie - Oh, yes. He shot someone because they were coming after the liquor.

Lloyd - My daddy was a Marshall too. He ... cut up stills ... he was really the only law man around here at that time. Thousands of people—they'd get together and if anybody had to fight, they'd stand around and watch them fist fight 'till it was over. Nobody hurt nobody. Dad even had a garage that he'd lock them up in if they got too drunk, instead of taking them to jail ... got them sober and let them go.

Where would you steal eggs?

Elmer - Just anywhere you could find them. About everybody used to raise chickens.

So, little kids would go over to other people's hen houses and get eggs?

Elmer - Yeah, if they could get a hold of them, they'd get them.

And you'd bring them home and you'd have to hide them from your parents?

Elmer - Oh, yeah. They'd tear you up for stealing.

Thelma - I think about those walks to the store that I used to do back then at such a young age, and I never ever thought anything about it. It was just exciting and an adventure to get to walk down there. But, I wouldn't do it today. We felt safe, I guess. Everyone that you met, that you come in contact with, someone you knew.

I heard my parents talk, I guess this would be before WWII, feuds over land, line fences. That was a big deal. People have been killed over here for two or three feet of land. Probably the one that lived is the one that got the land.

Melissa Johnson - What did Grandpa do back then, when he was sheriff?

Cordelia - He worked for Hassinger Lumber Co. He'd go around cutting down stills around here. He just done sheriff work.

He dismantled stills? Did someone tell him of the stills or did he just go looking for them on his own?

Cordelia - He would go look for them himself. He would get a deputy or two to go with him, and he would go at night a lot of times. Old man Umbarger, that used to own a farm up here, was interested in that still work.

Melissa Johnson - Was Andrew in the KKK?

Cordelia - Well, it was supposed to be a secret, but he was a Klu Klux.

Marty Johnson - What kind of stuff did they get into?

Cordelia - Take some people up the hill and tied them up to a tree. They threatened to set them on fire for things they'd done. Klu Klux underlined the law, I guess you might say.

What kind of people would they get after?

Cordelia - Anybody that was doing something that was breaking the law. He was a deputy sheriff. I forgot how many years. It was in the tens of years.

Now, there was something like the Ku Klux Klan?

Jean - My mother would talk about that. She just talked about what they did to men that wouldn't work and support their family. They were really quite set on that. My grandfather might have been a member. I guess I heard my grandmother tell it. If there were a lazy man in the community and he had a bunch of kids and didn't

try to support them, they would tar and feather him. That might have been in my grandmother's time, or my mother's time. I heard her tell that.

What would happen if somebody did steal something and that family let it be known that something had been taken?

Robert - They would get the sheriff.

Other people who seen the thief with it, would they report that?

Robert - Yes.

Who was sheriff?

Robert - I can remember at Konnarock we had Garland Patton, Andrew McDaniels, and the high sheriff of the county was Sam Dillard in Marion.

Were they trusted folks who got along with everybody?

Robert - Yes.

Were there any Ku Klux Klan in here?

Robert - They weren't organized, but some would get together sometimes like them. No one would know who they were. If someone got a little out of line, they would give them a warning.

What would a person have to do to be considered "out of line"?

Robert - Married men and women carrying on.

Was the wife's husband one of the Klan members?

Robert - Lots of times it was the wife that had it done on her husband.

The sheriff wouldn't get involved in that?

Robert - No.

What would they do? Would they be on horses?

Robert - They would be walking. They would burn a cross. Sometimes they would strap them down over a barrel and use belts on them. They broke a lot of stuff that went on, a lot of meanness. They would give them a warning. They wouldn't know, the ones causing this trouble, they wouldn't know who these men was. Most of them was good, honest Christian folks, church members. They would see that stuff go on and they would stop it from going on in the community. They would get out together and talk among themselves and figure out who was to be punished. They would plan a date to meet. Most of the time it would be dark. They wouldn't recognize who they were.

Was that a church thing—mostly people from churches?

Robert - Yes, and in the community.

They decided when somebody needed correction?

Robert - Yes.

Did the ministers support that sort of thing?

Robert - I guess they did.

Would they do this for people who were caught stealing a horse or burglarizing?

Robert - No, I guess if they caught them stealing a horse they would take them out and hang them.

CHAPTER 7. COMMUNICATION & TRANSPORTATION

If the railroad is what allowed Konnarock to support a population before the first World War, perhaps the automobile is what, after the second World War, allowed much of its population to remain. Today one finds Konnarock residents commuting daily as much as one and a half hours to jobs in larger towns. The story of the growing technological links between Konnarock and the rest of the world is told in this brief chapter. The basic facts are as follows. Passenger rail service lasted in Konnarock for only about 22 years, from 1907 to 1929. Until the 1960s passengers could board daily trains at stations several miles away in Whitetop Gap, Green Cove, or Damascus. The Konnarock post office lasted some years after the trains stopped coming, then mail was switched to rural free delivery. Regular phone service came in about 1949, but before that, the mail was the peoples' key link to other places. Within the area transportation and communication were predominantly on foot until the 1940s.

* * * * * * * * * *

Bernice - We walked everywhere we went.

Gladys - My brother and I would go to the post office. They finally got us a bicycle together around 1939, but you walked everywhere. There were not a lot of bicycles back in the '30s.

Fairy - The only way we had to get out of Konnarock was to come down on the train, and it just came once a day, or go all the way around by Chilhowie. There wasn't any cars. I remember the first car that ever came up there. Let me tell you a little funny joke. I remember the first airplane that ever came over. And you could hear it a long time before you could see it. The people heard it and were down on their knees a praying. They thought it was Jesus coming in the air. Even my sister was in the ones down praying. I were a little one; but, I can remember it very good.

And then the first car that came—it scared people because the roads were so rough. It made so much noise. And everything was in timber up in there then at that time. You couldn't see very far.

I can remember when I'd go to the Post Office—down that road, oh, it would be so dark. Big trees on each side of the road. I'd say if I met somebody, it'd scare me to death.

Did you ever ride the train that went up to Konnarock?

Wardie - Yeah! Just to ride it. I hopped on while it was rolling.

How did you get into Abingdon?

Wardie - I hitchhiked most of the time. Back in those days you did a lot of hitchhiking.

Did you hitchhike down to North Carolina to find that wife?

Wardie - Oh, yeah! No one had cars. I just walked. I took the train between Abingdon and Konnarock a lot of times. Flour, wheat, etc. came on the train, too.

Bernice - I even rode the log train. They had what they called a caboose and Mr. Remby took care of the saws and all those things. We just loved him ... he always had cookies. They

would set the caboose on the tracks somewhere so he would be there to work on the saws, and we would walk out to where he was and that was a treat.

Were there boys that rode on the logs?

Bernice - Not unless they snitched a ride. They used to sneak a ride on the Virginia Creeper train too. It didn't seem to bother anybody.

Blaine - When I went to Konnarock, there was not a hard top road anywhere. Not one. Straight Branch Road was more or less a trail. Actually, that is the old railroad bed there.

Robert - There were hardly any roads at all. I can remember when the first vehicle came in this country. Old man Frank Miller got an old truck here that had steel wheels with rubber welded on it—scared every horse in the country. He'd deliver groceries and haul stuff on it. They brought them in on the train, and he would haul them from the train to the store. They would haul logs on it out from up in the holler down to where they could load them on the train. Then the T-models came in and the dogs would run them up and down the road.

How did they get gas?

Robert - They had an old pump that pumped the gas up by hand. Some would hold 5 or 10 gallons. You would pump it up like pumping water out of the tank into a glass so you could see how much was in there.

The train would bring in the gas?

Robert - No, they would haul it in on a truck once they got a road. Before they had the gas tanks here, they would have to ride over to Chilhowie and take a barrel and get gas. Everyone who had a vehicle hauled their own gas in and had a gas drum on their property they would pump out of.

At what point did the store start carrying gas to sell?

Robert - I would say about '32 or '33.

Essie - When the job went out, the train went out too. Then we had to come to Damascus if you wanted to get on the train. When they quit running the train, Dad had to take the buggy to Creek Junction once a week to haul the milk. He met the train there; then they mailed our check to us. The milk went on to Abingdon or somewhere. We thought everything was gone when that train didn't come to Konnarock. When the train stopped, Lee Waters was the Postmaster and he had to take that mail all the way to Creek Junction and put it on the train down there. He had to bring it back the same way, I guess. We went on a route then like it is now, route one or two, or whatever it was. Rural delivery.

Who would you say was hit hardest in Konnarock when the train closed down?

Essie - The people that didn't have cars. You had to hire someone to take you out.

Were there a lot of people that didn't have cars?

Essie - Of course, yes. It was hard to buy the gas. They didn't have big wages then. And the job was gone and you had to sell your produce or go work in the mines to get money. You had to have money for all that.

Dora - We would go on picnics while at the Training School. They had an old truck we called the bread wagon. It didn't have windows in it. We would ... go up on Whitetop or anywhere. It didn't have anything but the windshield and the windows on each side. The other was closed up. Opened two doors behind to let you out or in. The reason it was

called the bread wagon, they hauled our groceries when they went to get flour or anything out of town. They made their own bread at the Training School.

Do you remember the train being an important part of Konnarock? What came up on the train that was so important?

Fairy - The mail was the main thing. Everybody was standing there waiting for the mail to go into the Post Office and be sorted out and see if they had any mail.

Thelma - We didn't have a lot of automobiles. There were some around, but not a lot, especially nothing during the day. The men did most of the driving, and their vehicles were used to go out of here to go to work.

I remember my uncle, Oscar Roark, when the Lincoln's had a furniture plant down there. He had a truck, and he took a lot of people. They just sat in the back on benches on either side of the truck. And haul a bunch. That was an enterprise on the side for him. He worked there and he also collected money from the men. This was a daily happening in Damascus in the '40s.

Roy - We used to use the lever cards, and I don't know what kept us from getting killed. Different ones got hurt. We went to town in Abingdon about once a month.

J. D. - Mr. Lee Waters, our mailman, had a truck. He went from there down to Creek Junction to catch the train and get the mail. The old post office used to set across the road on the other side, right where the Fire Department is now.

Helena - Nobody had too many cars back then. My dad had a truck that he used to take everybody in the country to churches where they had singing and dinner on the grounds. He would go and everybody would load up on the truck.

Thelma - We were pretty isolated up there on the farm at Azen. During the week we probably didn't see anyone except each other, and we had a radio but we had no electricity. It was a battery radio so only on special occasions did we get to listen to it.

When you were living here in the '30s, did you have a phone?

Roy - No. We communicated through writing. The mail came in on the train. We had a post office for years right down here where the old depot is at.

Jean - My parents used to ride a bus. My father worked at Lincoln's until they closed. (First it was a truck; then they got them a bus.) Walter Rupard had a private bus. He charged them so much to ride. They rode the back of a truck. I heard my mother and daddy tell me about that. No matter how cold or snowing, or slick, they rode the truck. They didn't have the road we have now; it was just a dirt road to Damascus. They would have to get out sometimes and push the truck back on the road. They had to walk about 6 miles, out and back, to work at Green Cove Health Center. We walked home from stuff, too. We walked a lot when I was a senior. If Tom would have to go to town to get something for the school, we would just walk home.

What held this community together before there was electricity or telephones?

Gladys - Family and church.

Bernice - Families helped each other and churches helped each other.

People just walked back and forth?

Gladys - Yes, and they walked to church all the time.

Bernice - We would have a series of meetings and people would walk to them, carry a lantern, very seldom saw a flashlight.

Gladys - When there was a death, and I guess back then it was pretty much just the Azen Cemetery, ... someone would go and ring the church bell. And, everybody would gather at the grave. The men took their shovels and their picks and they dug the grave. Then they came home and told their wives, and the wives got the word around.

Robert - Down at the mill, they had what they called the Wildcat Whistle. Sometimes they would blow that and everybody in the country could hear that and they knew there was something happening. Up here at Azen, if there was a death and they needed a grave dug, someone would go ring the church bell. People working around would hear the bell and go and volunteer to dig the grave.

One person from each family would go to the church?

Robert - Sometimes three or four; it just depended. The bell would be the first indication that something was wrong. Azen was the only church with a bell. There weren't any telephones so that was the way of communication.

About this film you made here, what year did you make that film?

John - I made part of it in 1934, and added some later after we came in '36. The original film of the tonsillectomy was made in the clinic where they turned the Girls' School into a hospital and had brought in a doctor. He brought all his equipment in and took out, I think, 20 tonsils in about 2 hours. It was done through the work of the Mothers' Club at the Girls' School and sponsored by the Girls' School. The people paid something for the tonsillectomy, but not the real cost of it. The girls were the nurses. They washed the beds and had them all ready for them. The whole week was given over to the tonsillectomy.

The film was mostly intended to show that?

John - That and the work of Kenneth Killinger building the churches, his going around and starting churches. I had no car. The Religious Motion Picture Foundation in New York supplied me with film. That was all they gave me, no transportation money. I had to hitchhike down here. I had my own camera, and they gave me enough money to buy the film I thought I needed. The people then supplied my livelihood while I was here. They housed me. I stayed some of the time with Kenneth Killinger near Marion.

How many months were you here?

I think it was about 6 or 7 weeks. I took pictures of the Vacation Bible Schools and showed the whole process of organizing and developing a Bible School. That was in '34, and then when I came back I added some material to it. I'm not even sure what I added, but there is some that is newer. We have that film in the archives of the Lutheran Church of America in Chicago.

Killinger had a print that was in very good shape because he took care of it. When we came here 20 years ago, he gave me that print, and from that print I made the videotape and that's what is in the archives. The original film is in the archives too because that original film will last a lot longer than the video.

CHAPTER 8: FORESTS

The original economy of Konnarock was based on the giant hemlock, chestnut, red oak, poplar, and other trees found around Whitetop Mountain and the heights nearby. Therefore, stories are often told about the forests and the logging business. Even though the forests have not grown back to their original size, they have returned as large characters in more recent drama around Konnarock: the U.S. Forest Service bought much of the land around there in the 1930s, then came back in the 1970s with a proposal to buy more and build a resort. Local residents organized a resistance and eventually the project was dropped. Many local people were able to keep the place rather quiet and undeveloped for one reason: they love the place. This love of home is partly due to the beauty of the forests.

* * * * * * * * * *

Cordelia - I lived in old Azen. Konnarock wasn't even here when I was born. The lumber company had not come yet.

There was a small community up at Azen? A few houses?

Cordelia - Yes, there were several houses in Azen before Konnarock was ever built. Azen was a post office.

Were there a lot of trees or farm land in Azen?

Cordelia - Tall hemlock timber all over.

Roy - When Grandpa moved to this country, Dad was just 6 years old. They moved up here to the Douglas farm, and there wasn't a stick of timber missing in this country then.

When was that?

Roy - I don't know. They had to clear to make a living. He said they cut timber thousands of feet and rolled them together and burned them to get a place to raise some corn.

Elmer - I hunted all the time. We'd squirrel hunt. Shoot a few pheasants.

Rabbits?

Elmer - Oh, yeah. We'd skin them out. Mother would cook them. She liked squirrel.

J.D. - People went into digging rhododendrons and sending them up to a guy in New Jersey. First, they sent them to a guy by the name of Anderson. Took a car load of them. They'd dig them and get a railroad car down the creek and load that thing up and ...

Put them in burlap bags or something?

J.D. - Right. And that's when the Depression came and they lost everything.

You mean, during the Depression all that laurel gathering, all that stopped?

J. D. - Oh, yeah. I think they had about two or three carloads already shipped out.

We used to coon hunt and fox hunt. My cousins had hounds.

We used to sell elderberry flowers.

Who would you sell to?

J.D. - The stores in Konnarock. Marion used to have a big herb store over there, like a wholesale house. They would buy it and then ship it to where they made medicine.

Weekly, would people do that?

J.D. - Oh yeah, every day they would. We used to go back there on Sundays and get us a bag full and carry it back and dry it. It would bring ½ cent a pound. You didn't get any money. You would get a due bill that you could use to buy something.

The cherry bark ran out?

J.D. - Beadwood bark. They would take the leaves, the bark and everything. The leaves last year was $1.37 a pound.

What's beadwood? How tall is it?

J.D. - 30-40 feet.

What did they use the leaves for?

J.D. - Make herbs out of them. A guy from Carolina comes through and picks it up.

Alice - They still gather cherry bark.

The CC camp was here for just a few years but had an impact.

Essie - There was a CC camp at Konnarock. They kept the roads up.

Do you remember any forest fires?

Essie - Yes, they used to get out of hand.

Lloyd - Oh, Lordy! There used to be forest fires here like they do out West now. Lots of them were set because people didn't have any money. Some fires just got away from people just trying to clear land and burn bush. We didn't have much to fight them with. You just dug out trails ... you didn't even have a way to get water in. You just dug in and sometimes you crossed over and got caught in the middle.

Did anybody ever die from fighting the fires that you know of?

Lloyd - I'd say some people did. I was lucky. The wind would raise real hard ... burn on both sides of us. The smoke was thick and you couldn't breathe. You talk about running to the closest creek we could get to; we left out of there, flying. Lots of people held something over their face to keep from burning more. Most would carry a big bandana or something to tie over their face. We didn't have masks and stuff.

It was cut over?

Robert - This was Fairwood Lumber Co. cut this on this side of the creek over. It went to Fairwood. I've rode the train across from Fairwood over here into this section. All this side of the creek up on the lefthand side as you go up through here went to Fairwood. All up to what they call Dave's Bottom and then it went back into towards the Helton. There was 1,006 acres of virgin forest on that side of the creek up through here. It was virgin timber when we moved here. In 1921 or 1922 they built this railroad, Hassinger did, up through here and got the timber out.

This was already cut then?

Robert - Yes.

And Fairwood was a separate company from Hassinger?

Robert - Yes.

They may have been in here earlier than Hassinger?

Robert - Yes, Hassinger didn't come in here until about 1905. It was cut down to the second house down there where Russell Adams lives. That was the boundary line that went across this way, and on down that side was Hassinger, and this up here was the Douglas Land Co.

Fairwood Company's property ended at Russell Adams and Hassinger's began down that way and Douglas Land Co. was another one.

Robert - The Douglas Land Co. is the one that sold it to the Fairwood. They owned this property. They had accepted 1,000 acres over here for what was supposed to be a park. It was never to be cut. Umbargers, they got there and wound up at the last and sold it. Mrs. Roosevelt used to come down up here at this Douglas Farm, they had a big farm up here. I reckon they were going to dedicate this as national park but it fell through.

This was early on?

Robert - Yes.

You mean Eleanor Roosevelt may have been behind that wanting it to be a park?

Robert - Some of her people, I believe it was.

The Douglases were her people, weren't' they?

Robert - There was another bunch of them that were related in there. She came down here to the festival in '29.

Who would they buy land from? Were there big land owners?

Dora - The Robinsons owned all through here. That's where we got this. Bought it through Ed Umbarger. He gave the money to Robinsons that owned it. They owned all the way over to Fairwood. They bought this whole valley. They left and went back to New York, and got Ed Umbarger to sell strips of land for them.

The Robinsons bought this after the Hassingers lumbered it?

Dora - Yes. We bought it off of Douglas. The Robinsons were here before the Douglas Land Co. Edgar Umbarger moved into that house where J. C. lives, and he sold it for the Douglas Land Co.

The Douglas Land Co. bought the entire thing from the Robinsons?

Dora - Yes.

Do you know how the Robinsons came to own this land?

Dora - They said they came through here one time on a visit and liked the valley so good. There wasn't anything here but the trees I guess, and they said they were going to buy the whole valley. They were rich people back then.

It might be interesting to investigate that and see who owned it before the Robinsons.

Dora - Nobody did, I don't think, but the government. The government owned everything.

The Douglas Land Co. probably bought it for the trees because they knew they were going to harvest it. Then the Hassingers sold it off without any trees on it, I guess.

Dora - The Hassingers never owned it up here. They owned it down there at Konnarock. They donated the bark and the lumber to build the Training School. I hope I'm telling this right.

So you got the land from the Douglas Co. who still owned it. They let the Hassingers take the trees off of it.

Dora - Yes.

Do you know what year you got your land?

Dora - 1942, I think it says on my deed.

Are there any organizations from outside the community that threatened to undermine Konnarock or make trouble after the war? They might mean the Forest Service.

Dora - That's what they mean. That's the only thing that has bothered us--buying up land off of people. I don't think they are still doing that. They have slowed down. Claimed they didn't have much money.

Did any of that personally affect you or take neighbors away?

Dora - Some of the neighbors on the Laurel sold theirs to them, which they shouldn't have done.

Were you afraid it might come down and they would want your land?

Dora - Yes, it sort of worried me there for a while until they quit buying it up. I've been here a long time, and I didn't want to give up my land.

How did residents respond to the Forest Service efforts to purchase land?

Dora - I think a lot were very upset because they didn't want to be moved out. The ones that moved out in Fairwood didn't want to be moved out. There shouldn't be organizations that can take a person's land.

Jean - The residents of Konnarock did not want the Forest Service to purchase their land. The Service bought out Comer's Creek.

Did the Forest Service try to purchase your land from you?

Denton - Yes, there was a time they wanted to buy it. The government did. They said they would pay us for the place and we could live here as long as we lived. But, not one of our children could stay with us if we got sick--just my husband and I could stay. If you get out, you would have to stay out.

One time they claimed they were going to have a ski slope come here. It would come down in our field. They wanted to buy it. They never threatened to take it. The Forest Service man came several times and said you can live in the house, but the kids couldn't even come and stay all night. What do you think of that? You should have heard what my husband said to him. He said, "When my kids come home, there wouldn't be any home here."

What did he mean by that?

Denton - He would leave. They said they would take the land, but they didn't.

So, they did tell you they would take it?

Denton - Oh yeah.

How did you respond to that?

Denton - We told them to try it. They claimed the ski slope would come off our place, but it didn't. They never came back any more.

John - The Forest Service has been purchasing land. They bought land, a strip of land that somebody owned all the way to the top of the mountain and that land is now forest land. Then the Forest Service bought all the top of Whitetop. They own all of Whitetop Mountain.

Have there been efforts by the Forest Service to get any of your 80 acres?

John - They've not pushed it. I don't think they are in the market to buy any land right now. They don't have the money for it. I think they might like to have it.

Ella Mae - I know a lot of people sold to the Forest Service because they paid a lot of money.

You weren't asked to sell your land?

Ella Mae - No. I know when we owned the white house, we owned 15 acres of land. We sold it to the government and then bought Dad's farm. The government gave us $9,000 for the 15 acres and this lot. Then where the Girls School garage is setting, my daddy give them that much land off of the 15 acres.

Roy - The government bought a lot of land after I came back. Some of the ones over toward Troutdale and Fairwood had their life savings tied up in places, but the government took it.

Do you remember anybody being opposed to selling land to the Forest Service?

Everett - Yes, I heard a lot of people. There are still a lot of people who oppose it, but people that want to sell goes to the government first to see if they can sell it.

You would have been in Abingdon during the '70s when the Forest Service was trying to take the land?

Thelma - Yeah, but I was very interested in it, of course. I heard a lot of talk. I don't know how much of it is true. I do know that they bought up everything that they could get their hands on and they still are. They bought Madge Parson's place not long ago. And if you look on the map, you'll see that Konnarock is just a tiny little valley. And, look at the Forest Service map, right down the creek, completely surrounded by the National Forest. Just one tiny little valley is all that's left. Eventually, they will get it all, because we've got the free parks already and building a new road from Chilhowie and bringing the tourists through, so I feel like it's a matter of time. I think my brother is feeling that way too. If I had money, any property that came available, I'd buy it. For one reason your money don't make anything on interest now, and property is a much better investment.

Wilma - Over at Fairwood, the Forest Service took that whole area. People are very bitter here, and personally I would rather that the Forest Service than somebody from Florida or Whitetop or North Carolina plant pine trees on it. They come here and buy the land, and the first thing they do is post it. But if the Forest Service gets it, you can go onto it.

What do you think about the Forest Service in the area?

Elmer - I worked on that pest control there a long time. If it wasn't for the Forest Service I guess the forest would be destroyed and cut. I love the mountains, myself. In other words, I'm glad they got a lot of it.

Robert - I think the Forest Service did a wonderful thing when it took this property over here at the top of the mountain. I thought at one time that was a cruel thing to do, but if they hadn't done that, it would have been you wouldn't have had any privilege of going out in the mountains hiking, fishing, or hunting if they hadn't stepped in and done that. But they have got a lot of restrictions I don't like. They will build roads and then put a lock on the gate. They are spending a lot of money I see as unnecessary. If they would manage it like it ought to be, it would be a wonderful thing. But, they did preserve these mountains through here. If they don't make it hard for the people and get them turned against it. In the '30s people didn't have any way of making a living and they herbed. They stepped in and tried to fine them and stop them from that. They come almost to destroying this whole country. They would set fires and fight fires to make money. If they get too strict, they will just destroy it. It won't do anybody any good.

CHAPTER 9. WAR & RELOCATING

WWII probably stimulated the fastest period of change in Konnarock's history. The war took many boys (estimates range from 20 to 100) out of Konnarock, and although only a few died, the effects of war were felt by all. In our interviews, we were amazed at the large number of out-of-state jobs that the war provided for Konnarock ex-patriots. Indeed, Konnarock's continued existence as a community after the 1940s seems to have been dependent in part on money being sent (or brought) home from Pennsylvania, Maryland, and other places. Many a native tells the story of moving away for 30 years and coming back to retire under the shadow of Whitetop.

* * * * * * * * * *

Dora - Several of the young men that was 18 joined the army. They would give their family their pay, send home so much money every month. I know this family, her son went to the army, and he sent her money. But he got killed, James Blevins.

What happened when a soldier was killed? Did they bring the body back here?

Dora - They brought Carl Huffman back. They had a military service. They got a group in Marion and one in Troutdale.

Did the church have their own service for them?

Dora - Most of them were killed overseas, and some of them they took to Arlington Cemetery. They didn't bring James Blevins back. He was the one that lived next to us.

They would come down and have a memorial service or a military service here even though the body wasn't here?

Dora - No, I don't think they did that to Margaret. Her son was flown back straight to Arlington, and she was already an older woman and she didn't get to go. They didn't have the means to go.

So they didn't have a service of any kind?

Dora - Not down here. Of course they had one over Carl Huffman over at the graveyard. The military had their service for them. The church wasn't involved in it. They had a prayer.

What did people think if a body didn't come back? Was that considered really bad?

Dora - Yes, they did. They thought it was awful.

You had the two boys that went off to war and neither of them got a scratch.

Fairy - That's right.

But, God spoke to you one day and told you to pray for them and a few other Konnarock boys, and they all came back.

Fairy - They all came back.

Except for that Pennington boy, who God didn't mention.

Fairy - He didn't mention his name.

He died, and they buried him over there. But, you didn't know many people who lost boys in the war.

Fairy - Not from up there. He was the only one that was lost.

Did things get bitter for everybody during WWII? What do you remember about that?

Fairy - I don't remember much because I've tried to put it all behind me. ... All I can think about is just my boys leaving.

How many years were they over there?

Fairy - Two or three.

And they came back about the same time?

Fairy - There wasn't much difference, the time they came back.

Did you all celebrate when they returned?

Fairy - Oh, yes. Just in our own home. We done a little dancing around and clapping our hands.

How did you find out the war had ended, on the radio?

Fairy - I'm not sure that we had a radio at that time. I know how we heard when it started. We went over to Glade Spring to visit a family that we knew and they told us that the war started.

About the bombing of Pearl Harbor?

Fairy - Yes.

That was a on a Sunday that the bombing happened.

Fairy - Yes, on my oldest son's birthday. He was 17.

Did you have brothers go off to war?

Wardie - I had one that went but didn't stay long. They wouldn't let him stay. He wasn't old enough. He lied about his age.

Did your family lose any relatives due to the war?

Wardie - We lost one brother in Europe, in Germany. Mother was pretty torn up about it.

Carrington - My brother, Wayne, was an airplane mechanic in WWII. He worked on B-29s all the time. And I have a nephew that was in that Pearl Harbor thing; but, he came out alright. He was in the Navy. There was a lot of young people gone then from around here. One boy, they say, they captured him. The Germans did, and he almost starved to death.

Ella Mae - My brother Bill was supposed to have been eighteen years old, I don't know how he lied and got in. But, he went in the Army when he was seventeen. So he went through five invasions in Germany and never got a scratch. Brother Ed went but they sent him to a real cold climate. And what was it he took from that—something, I don't know, but he hasn't been a well man since. He is still living; he's 80 years old.

Do you remember any soldiers coming back and telling about their experiences?

Ella Mae - I know when brother Bill came back he wouldn't talk about the army. He wouldn't tell you anything about it. The only thing he said was that when they dug the ditches, ... he'd lay in the ditch on his face thinking that he would never raise up any more on account of the poison gas or something like that.

Were there any men whose bodies were brought back? Did you go to any funerals?

Ella Mae - Well, the only one that I know of was Wayne Blevins' son. He was just a young boy. I believe he had been overseas only three days when he got killed. Now my Uncle Conley went over there and he was in a tank. And they bombed him. He lived for a while but he died. And Grandma would never have him brought back and so he was buried in Germany. Vivian and Russell has been over there to his grave. That was my mother's brother.

Gladys - At one time up here in front of where the post office used to be, you will find a stone that lists the names of the WWII dead. Hettie is the one that did the names on that. The Community Association hopes to have our deed to that, and it's to be restored. She did the lettering on the sign.

Do you think that WWII led to a decline in the community or made the community stronger?

Gladys - There was more income from the war effort, and the fellows that went away all made allotments to their parents. It helped the economy.

In WWII, would some people go off and work in jobs in the shipyards and places like that?

Gladys - Yes, but a lot of them, the family didn't go—just the husband. My dad went to Newport News and worked in the shipyard for a couple of years.

Thelma - I remember when they put up the board [with the names of the boys from this community who had served in WWII] down here and built this pool. Every evening I'd walk by and read my uncle's name. I was proud of him.

Those who served and lived as well as those who died?

Thelma - Yes, I think all of the ones from this community that were in WWII is on the board. It was ... like a billboard, on a smaller scale and painted white. The names were lettered in black. The board was right here where Mr. Hayes' fence comes along through there. It seemed like it might have been around 20 names on it, quite a few. My understanding is that the remnants of that is in Junior Water's barn.

Lloyd - Well, I went off for about two years and worked a little while in Pennsylvania, come back and volunteered for the Navy. I was about 15 because I had to get a thing from school before I could work. I come back and went into the Navy, and then I was transferred from the Navy into the Seebees, the guard force. I guarded Newport News and Norfolk, VA. Then I was up in Baltimore, until six months after the duration of the war. Then I was discharged and come back to this country and worked in timber and logging.

Denton - WWII affected our family a lot. My mother had five sons, and they all left at one time. A case of shells hit Paul's foot. She had one in the Navy, one in the Marines, and the Army. War changes a lot of things. My mother worried a lot.

Robert - My brother was in the Navy and I was in the Army. He was in the South Pacific and I was in Europe.

What kind of injury did you get in the war?

Robert - I got three bones shot out of that hand. One went through the elbow. I had a piece of shrapnel that went through my hip into the end of my spine. It's still in there. One went through my leg. I was in France in a little town called Lavern. I had been nicked several times.

Where did you spend your time in the hospital?

Robert - I was in England.

Were you ever homesick?

Robert - I guess I was, but most of the time you had other things on your mind. You didn't have a lot of time to think about it. You didn't know if you were going to live or not. I was right on the front lines all the time. People wouldn't believe what we seen over there. As we went up through France, after we hit the beach there at Normandy, there were little kids, I guess not over 2 years old, out there crawling. They were hungry. They would chew your shoestrings. You couldn't stop. If you had anything, you would give it to them; but, you couldn't stop because you had to move on. I guess their parents had been killed. We crossed the Laver River, and it was red with human

blood. I had bullets go by so close they would burn you. When the bombs and shells were falling, you didn't know where they were going to hit.

I bet you wondered how you ended up there?

Robert - I would volunteer to go back over there before I would let them come in here and do the destruction that was done to them countries over there.

Nervie - Ard was expecting that he might be called off, but he never was. I had a couple of brothers that went to the World War.

Did they come back?

Nervie - Yes.

Did you go to any funerals?

Nervie - No, they were too far away. And things was picking up and getting better.

During the war, things were getting better?

Nervie - Well, I don't know that I remember the war. My brothers, two of them, was in the war but they came back home. And since then, seems like everything began to pick up. Then when the Vietnam War came I had three boys in there at one time. Do you remember when Jim got lost in the Army? He was lost four days and didn't have anything to eat.

Everett - I went to Baltimore, MD and worked in the shipyards a while, and then I got a call and went to the service. I went up in Virginia. I got my orders and went on a troop train to Miami Beach, FL. I had it real rough down there in that hotel for about a year and a half, in '42 or '43. They used hotels then. Then I went overseas.

Where did you go?

Everett - First, I went to England and was stationed there for a good while and then went to Belgium.

Did you see combat?

Everett - I was kind of behind the lines. I was with the Signal Company.

Did you get some training that was useful after the war?

Everett - Not that I really could say helped me any.

When the war ended, where did you go?

Everett - I was in Germany when the war ended, and I came to England to my base. What I done was pull radar equipment into the front lines. When I got orders the war was over, they said they were going to ship us straight back to the States. ... we came back into Belgium and they said, "Don't unpack your clothes. Now you are getting ready to go." We went to the airport and came back to England and got over there, and they said, "Some of you are lucky and others don't unpack you clothes, your outfit is going straight on to the States." I never had to unpack. They shipped us out and we went to another place and they told us the same thing. They did me that way, I think, 12 or 13 times. When I did come home, I went back to Germany again and was stationed over there a while. I got out in '45.

Where did you go when you got back to the States? Did you come back to Konnarock?

Everett - I come back to Konnarock. It was the only place I knew. Pretty much everybody had to leave the country because there wasn't work. When everybody went to the army, that kind of stopped all the farming because the kids helped the parents. Farming families didn't have anybody to keep digging and farming because the work had to

be done by hand and with a horse. This place has all grown up. All these places were fields.

During and after WWII, I understand a lot of people left Konnarock.

Essie - A lot of people went to the coal mines; that's where the money was at. The young people had to leave, to go where the work was. I heard of a lot of young couples who went off and got jobs; they sent money back home to keep their farms. When you are older, it is not easy to move somewhere else.

How old were you when you moved here to Damascus?

Essie - It was after my husband died in 1989. I couldn't get out up there, and I don't drive. I lived up on a hill up there. It was his mom and dad's home place.

Tim bought the place where we lived. His wife is from Wise County and is finishing out her retirement down there. She is almost ready to retire and her people are down there. She stays down there and works. She works for the county. She comes home on Fridays and goes back Monday morning to her job. That is the way she travels, back and forth, until she finishes out her retirement. She is so near and she put in all these years, it is a shame to drop it now. She is trying to put in her retirement, then she will be back to stay.

Madge - My father went to Pennsylvania and went to work cutting timber.

You all stayed here and he sent money home?

Madge - Yes. My husband got a job in Pennsylvania and went up and I moved, and I was so homesick.

How long did you stay there?

Madge - We went back and forth for 12 years, and we've been here ever since.

What year did you move permanently back here to Konnarock?

Wilma - About '55.

Jean - My grandfather would go to WV and take the family. He would go work in the mines. My daddy worked some in the mines. They would go out there to work in the winter months. They came back in the spring, stayed through summer, and raised their crops and stuff. Then they would all go back to West Virginia.

None of my brothers and sisters ever lived in Konnarock. They all got married and left. Bruce always lived in Salem and BeBe always lived in Chilhowie. Brenda and Linda married guys from Damascus. Linda lives in North Carolina now. My mother and father are not here anymore. I don't have anybody calling Konnarock home.

Thelma - You know, a lot of men worked away and came back on weekends. In the week, it was women and children.

In the '40s, my dad and several others would car pool, back and forth between West Virginia. They'd stay all week. They'd come home, depending on how the mines was working, but usually Dad would get home late Saturday evening and we'd meet him. We'd walk down through that little hollow there while Mom was baking a cake and wait for him. And he'd get home just about dark and then after church Sunday they'd start back. That's about all we ever saw of him.

Well, I went to work in Marion at 18 and married at 19. I lived in Marion for a short period and then we moved to Sugar Grove. We lived with Delmer's parents while he attended Emory & Henry College. And after he graduated, we moved to Meadowview because that was the closest apartment we could get. He was the first

male hired at Washington County Department of Social Services. He talked all the time about being surrounded with so many women. And I said, "Well, you're the luckiest man I know."

What kind of work did you get into after you got older?

Elmer - Well, I went to Virginia Hardwood over here. Bastian. I cut timber over there for a long time. I left my family and went up there to work. Well, I'd go so long and then I quit and come back. They worked the fire out of me. I think I got 55 cents an hour. Used a cross cut saw. They didn't use no chain saws like they got now. They had camps to stay in. They had cooks. They'd make your beds and everything.

How often would you come back here?

Elmer - About once a month. I was 40 some when I got married.

You were a single guy going back and forth.

Elmer - Yes, drunk a lot of good liquor and beer. Oh, I'd come back and go on and work for 3 or 4 months. Spend my money. Come back and loaf around. Drink and spend it.

I worked in mushrooms for about ten years, ten or twelve. That was in Pennsylvania though. Well, I guess there's been a lot of people work up there. Now that they started growing them overseas, I think they tore all those buildings down. See, they grow them overseas in caves.

Dora - The men went to different places. They went out so the husband could find better work or find a job. A lot of them, just the men went, and the women stayed and raised the babies, raised gardens, and hoed corn.

Were they able to do that on their own?

Dora - Yes. The children that were big enough went to the cornfield and hoed it.

The men would return every once in a while with some cash or goods?

Dora - Yes, every two or three weeks or a month according to how far they went off to work.

Those who owned their home were more likely to stay?

Dora - Yes. Very few families up and left. Most of them had a little home. Back then you could buy land for hardly nothing.

Wilma - Up at the Girls' School, they had people from companies, especially the CIA in Washington, they would come down to the Girls' School and recruit employees. There were a lot of kids that went up there to work. They came every year.

Nervie - My daddy used to stay a week or two weeks at a time, and then walk home on the weekends. He would go as far as Rugby.

From up on the Laurel over to Fairwood or to Rugby to go to a cutting job. How did he live while he was off on a job?

Nervie - They would have a house or a shanty is what they called it. And they would have one of the men just cook.

Joe went and registered before he was 18, just so he could go to Pennsylvania and pick mushrooms.

Ard, my husband, worked in the mines all the time. Before we was married, he went out there in West Virginia. Daddy worked in the mines. He would come home about every week, and sometimes, every two weeks because we had that farm up there. And we had a few cattle and this and that. He would tell the boys what to do the next week while he was gone. They done the farming and me too.

Ella Mae - A lot of men went to Lancaster, Pennsylvania to work. They cut timber for a man. A lot went from here to grow mushrooms in Pennsylvania. Around in here there wasn't any work for men to do unless they farmed. Now we didn't have any place to

farm, and we had four children. We just had four acres of land. Dad and Johnny ... would farm together. The water kept getting so high down here. That's when we would have floods and things. Well, I had the twins and boy when it would start raining my daddy would come up and get the twins and make me go down to his house. And then one time they had a real bad flood, and he said that was it ... that he would give me an acre of land down where Lettie's house is now.

How did he get to Pennsylvania?

Ella Mae - There was three Huffman men that lived over in Laurel. They were no relation to my daddy—Boyd Huffman, John Huffman and Junior Huffman. They worked up there and that's how Johnny got his job. He went up there with them to work.

While I lived in Christiansburg, my husband was taking care of the silver foxes.

Did other people work at the Radford arsenal?

Ella Mae - I have a brother-in-law that worked up there.

Mae S. - My husband, Brack, usually cut timber. He worked in Pennsylvania for thirty-five years. I told him he didn't know anything about the young'uns. I had to stay at home and raise them. We moved all of our stuff up there once and stayed 6 months, and I come back. We couldn't find a house up there. We lived in an old motel, and I just decided I'd come back. They were expensive and I couldn't afford them out in town, so I tried to find one out in the country and couldn't do it.

Did Brack ever work with the wood that was being cut here?

Mae S. - Well, he had worked with the wood here. They use to cut the wood up on the White Top, and over on that mountain. After he quit that, he went to Pennsylvania. Sometimes Brack would be gone for a month. He would come home maybe every month. I told him he didn't know anything about raising young'uns. The next thing I knew all of my children went to Pennsylvania. None of them finished school. They got too big and didn't want to go, so we didn't press them. Brack's brothers worked in Pennsylvania.

My sister-in-law's children took their mother up north. I said, "Mabel, Why don't you come back down here?" She still had that place. She said, "I get more money up here." That money is more important, I guess, than her health.

Lloyd - People went to Pennsylvania more than anywhere else. Some went to Fairfax, VA. They were doing a lot of building up there. Lots of people went to work in furniture factories. They had to go somewhere else to make a living.

Your sister and her family moved to Pulaski, Virginia?

Fairy - Yes, my brother-in-law worked in a gun powder plant—him and his boys. They moved up there just before the war started and during the war.

Did you know of a lot of people who moved out of Konnarock during the war because of the factory jobs?

Fairy - Well, there was several that had come with the Hassingers that left: the Barneses, Yearicks, Olsons and Harriers.

Wilma - I don't think people wanted to leave, but there were more jobs to come back to when Brunswick came to Marion and the Forest Service had jobs. There was work for them to come back to when there hadn't been. I think people wanted to stay here because it's where they were born and raised.

Carrington - We just moved out in '29. I lived about 3 years in West Virginia.

Why did your family move?

Carrington - After the mill closed down, my dad went there and worked. He was a blacksmith for this machine shop where my brother was boss.

My brother, Floyd, was never employed with Hassinger. He lived in West Virginia mostly, and my other brother, too, was a coal miner. West Virginia was the best place. They could get better employment. My sister-in-law and myself, we were quite a while in Damascus at the Lincoln plant.

Cordelia - We left this area and moved to the East Coast, Appomattox County.

Why did your family move back here?

Cordelia - My mother was dissatisfied. She was from Azen. Then she went to Washington state one time and Appotomax another. I guess she wanted to come home.

Gladys - A lot went up north to work in car factories. A lot from here went to the Tidewater area to work in the shipyards.

Roy - I started working in West Virginia when I was about 19 or 20. At one time you had to be 21 to get on a public job. Insurance wouldn't cover you. Then in 1936 I was married. I went to the mines to work and worked there a couple of years. I had a lot of stomach trouble. You had to be on your knees all the time. The last work I did was in Pennsylvania. I was up there 23 years. I ran an overhead crane in Pottstown for a granite company. It was surrounded in steel mills. I had a good job.

You retired after that?

Roy - Yes, I retired in '70 and moved back here in '71, I guess.

When you came back here, was it because you inherited land?

Roy - I already owned this. I bought it from my father. A pension man can't live up there on a fixed income because they have too much overhead taxes. That was one of the reasons I came back here.

Thelma - My parents started housekeeping in West Virginia. And Dad didn't like the environment for the family and we moved back. You see, a lot of men lived out there in the boarding houses ... and some of them got a little rough. I guess it'd be a little similar to the gold towns—a little drinking and prostitution, stuff like that. I think he made a good decision at that time even though we didn't get to see him very much from what I've seen of West Virginia coal towns. I took my daughter when she was in kindergarten, and I went out to see an uncle who was ill and she came back and at "Show and Tell" she told them that she went to West Virginia that weekend. And she said, "Guess what? It rains black water!" She had seen some mud puddles, all soot, coal dust in them. ... it is grimy out there.

I'm glad he brought us back up to the farm. Another factor in his bringing the family back was my grandfather. I think he insisted. And then, oddly enough, he went out and hired a truck and went out, my mother told me ... that they were eating dinner and he wouldn't wait for her to clear the table. He just wrapped the dirty dishes in the tablecloth and packed it on the back of the truck and he rode on the back of the truck. A week later my grandfather got pneumonia. It was raining and nighttime and he was riding the back of the truck. And then he died. After he died, my father bought the farm from my grandmother. But, he had a house there on the farm that would put Dad and his family in. He wanted them back here. So that was probably a big, big thing was my grandfather wanted us back. So I never saw him. He died just shortly before I was born.

Denton - My husband worked in Pennsylvania. He would come home in the spring to get the crop out, then go back to work. We would take care of the crops. He would return to help us harvest. He often didn't work in the winter. It was rough up there in winter. My oldest boy went to Pennsylvania and stayed.

The women that would entertain the idea of leaving, where could they get work?

Denton - Not until Troutdale or Damascus. They had a factory down in Damascus and a lot of them went there. When Troutdale opened up, many went there. Then many went to Chilhowie.

John - Although I was only here for three years, I returned, living another 21 years in this country. Like many people, Cecil Pennington went away and was a cook at a federal prison up near Roanoke, and then he came back here and built a house and lives here with his wife Hazel. They have a nice garden every year although he's 77 years old. His children had to move away to work, but they always come back at holidays for mother's cooking. They love the mountains and come to see them and bring their children along.

You lived in a logging camp in West Virginia with your father?

Robert - Yes, they had a boarding house. I went to Pennsylvania in, I believed, '31 or '32, and stayed a couple years and came back and went in the CC camps in '34. After that I went back to Pennsylvania and in '43 I had to go in the Army. I got crippled up in the Army so I couldn't go back to construction work. I had to do little odd jobs.

J. D. - I was discharged from the Army on the 27th of November 1945.

Were you planning to come home and try to make a living in Konnarock?

J. D. - No. I came home and went to Ohio and worked in the coat factory. We stayed up there a couple of months. Quit up there and came back. One day Elmer and I thought we'd go up around Fairfax up there and see if we could get us a job. We could afford to take us to Chilhowie. We hitched.

Lloyd - I went to Pennsylvania to live. Well, we lived in Pennsylvania and Maryland together, about ten years. I worked in B. F. Goodridge Tire Company. I worked for an oil drilling outfit and drilled water wells through the oil lines up there in Pennsylvania. We drilled the water wells with oil well drilling outfits. It's hard work, man, and cold work, 24 hours a day 7 days a week.

What year did you come back here after that?

Lloyd - I don't really remember what year I came back here to stay. I guess '52 or '53. But after I come back here to stay, I went back to Fairfax and worked at carpentry work.

You left your wife here to raise the kids.

Lloyd - I lived here, built a house. But, I would go up there and work and come back every week or two and board up there. I went up there and done carpenter work. I built a few houses around here. I've done about everything, I reckon. I kept on trucking right on through the years, into the '60s.

CHAPTER 10. WHY KONNAROCK STILL EXISTS

Very few of America's logging camps from the turn of the century lasted after the trees were gone. There are several reasons why one might have expected Konnarock to fold like nearly every other similar company town: the place was never incorporated, the Company took most of its facilities when it left, the place was and remains isolated from non-farm jobs, and there is not enough farmland to support most residents with cash crops. Yet, Konnarock is still with us. We asked our interviewees why and received a variety of answers.

* * * * *

J. D. - A lot of people never want to leave Konnarock. The old people had a home; they bought that land there and could farm enough to make a living.

Carrington - Well, I think a lot of the people had roots here. They liked it. We own our own home and everything.

Alice - Everybody that left Konnarock for jobs are getting to retirement age, and they are all coming back.

Dora - They love Konnarock is all I know. A lot of them have gotten older like myself and they have a little check to live on and they don't need to go anywhere.

I do not tend the land by myself. Clifton cuts my lawn and he has some cattle on my place. I've got my chickens and my dogs.

Wilma - That's one thing that I can say for this area, other than it being beautiful, people take care of each other. When my husband was in the hospital, I couldn't believe all the cards and all the stuff that was brought in. I had neighbors and friends that went with me to Richmond. A man who used to live here but didn't know my husband found out he was up there in the hospital, and he visited him every day. Even after people leave here, they carry on the tradition.

Lloyd - People settled down here that really likes it here. They had to leave to make a living. Everything is growing so fast and they are so happy to get out of that and get back where they were raised. They remembered themselves as kids back here and had room to walk around without people all over you. You can live cheaper here than other places too. They can't live in the big cities. They can't pay $500 a month housing, 'cause you don't draw that much.

Gladys - People come back that are retiring.

We have a lot of couples grow up together and marry. They want to come back; both sets of parents live here. And good churches.

The elderly know that they can always get help in just a very short time. We have the very best fire department and rescue squad I know of any place. I have to have oxygen for Mother real often, and I know that when I call 911 they are going to be here. I can depend on them.

Roy - They seem to stick together around here. It is a nice place to live. We have good air, good water, and I like the mountains.

Jean - People stay in Konnarock because we were raised here, generation after generation. Most people that move out come back.

Elmer - Well, I guess where a man is born and raised at, I guess you like that better than anywhere, in my opinion. I came back to die. A lot of people love this country. I like the mountains, timber and stuff like that. Everywhere you look you see mountains. I don't like flat country. Good community, I guess, to be in. Boy, you get into those cities, they're rough. Some would shoot you to look at you.

Ella Mae - I just can't live anywhere else. I have good neighbors.

Now a lot of people that has moved away is moving back. And a lot of people wants to come back if they could just find a house and land.

And there is no other but White people lives here. Nobody has given us any trouble.

Why is it that Konnarock is still here?

Bernice - They raised cattle and they grew their own vegetables, corn, wheat, rye, and everything. It wasn't bad. We had plenty for the time.

Gladys - Most of the people in this area are Scotch-Irish. They have a very strong sense of family. After the Depression, the ones that went away as soon as they could come back, they came back. I think that has preserved Konnarock. When I was growing up, a lot of these fellows ... wouldn't even finish high school. They would go up north and get a job; they would buy homes as soon as they could; and then as soon as they had enough years in to retire, they sold their homes and came back here. They usually got land that some of the family owned. We have a lot of them my age and younger coming back now.

Thelma - Probably one of the reasons why some of them stayed was because we've had a doctor. We had a school. The Hassingers left the school. And then, I think they sold the land pretty cheap.

I like it up here. I've had some people ask me if it didn't bother me to leave Abingdon and move back to Konnarock. But, I like it better in Konnarock. There's more of a sense of community, I think, especially with being there with the store. I love that because I'm a people person. But in Abingdon, I mean, what do they have there that you can't, if you want it, go get it? You can have the best of both worlds up here. If I want to go to Barter, I go to Barter, movies, anything like that I want to go to, or shopping. Shopping's not a big thing with me anymore. I think a lot of people come back here, for this thing of "getting back to their roots." Once you're born an old mountaineer, you're always one.

Denton - I think people are happy with where they are. They like the churches that are here. They like each other. I think that is the reason. I just never thought about getting out because I'm living just fine and I like being right here. We have very good neighbors. Everyone gets along so well in here.

Do they come over to see you some?

Denton - Oh, yes. Everybody does. I hope Konnarock stays just like it is. I love the country, the people, so I couldn't ask for more. We worked and got it built up to what it is today. Anything we plant, grows and grows well.

Nervie - I guess people have what little they have here. They just want to keep it.

Everett - I feel like one reason we survived was our ancestors were raised back in these mountains from Wilkesboro, North Carolina. And, back this way, they lived hard and knew how to make their living and the rest didn't.

Helena - I think most of our grandparents came out of North Carolina. The Hayes came out of Hayes, North Carolina and Surry Co. When they were growing up and when we were growing up, each one had a job. And, I think that's what kept everything going then. Now children don't want to do stuff like that. I did teach mine how to milk. We raised everything and canned everything. We didn't have refrigerators but we had spring boxes to keep our milk.

Helena - One of the reasons Konnarock endured through the years was that KTS helped people a lot. People would donate clothes, and they would sell them. People would buy them and the money would go back into the school. They had it in the basement, and when the old storehouse set down here, they would have it in it too. People would drive across the mountain to it.

Robert - The land was supposed to be given to anyone who was a descendant of Chief Ned Sizemore. They had to register what relation they were to him. My mother registered us. I can get the card and show you.

It's an enrollment card sent to Bertie Combs claiming descendancy from the Cherokees.

Robert - Through my mother, as the legend goes, this was sacred hunting ground for the Indians in this valley. They would come in here and make their arrowheads. We used to find arrowheads down here where they had the chipping ground where Beartree Camping Ground is. They would come in here and hunt, fish, and gather herbs for medicine. You would be surprised at all the medical herbs that grow around this mountain. The old saying is that when the Chief went out of this country he grieved. They said that fires would never scar the face of these mountains.

Why do you think Konnarock didn't disappear over the years?

Robert - A lot of these people are related to the Sizemore tribe is the only reason I might know. Something that draws you back. It's a mystery.