

History United: Memory Initiative

Interview with Fred Smith (FS) and Sallie Smith (SS)

Interviewer: Evelyn Riley (ER)

Monday June 2, 2014 at 1:00PM at Danville Regional Foundation Offices, Danville, VA

ER: Have you ever been on the other side of it? Being interviewed?

FS: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

SS: He's been both.

FS: I'm Vietnam veteran. So I've been on the other side.

ER: Okay. And we use wireless mics and we only have the one mic with the receiver so I'm trying to put it between you and listen to see if I can hear you guys both pretty well, if not we'll have to figure something else out but I'm going to try to go ahead and test this out really fast while you guys are filling that out. Hopefully it'll be loud enough.

FS: We the first in Caswell?

ER: Hm?

FS: Are we the first?

SS: No. Rhonda.

ER: The first to be interviewed?

FS: Yeah.

ER: No we've been doing interviews since the middle of last summer.

FS: Okay.

ER: Yeah it was a group of three interns working last summer and then just me so it's been a little bit slower through the fall and the spring.

FS: Yeah, the guy that helps me has done 178 veterans across North Carolina. We do them mainly for the archives and rarely for the military foundation part.

ER: Gonna shut this...to have some quiet. *-laughs-*

FS: Is that wireless?

ER: Yeah, it's wireless let me see if setting it up works any better. If I could just get you guys to say something. *-laughs-*

SS: *-laughs-*

FS: Yeah. Are we the first? *-all laugh-*

SS: No

ER: Alright

FS: And Rhonda got us into this huh?

ER: Did she? *-laughs-*

SS: Yeah, Rhonda Griffin. I've gotten into a whole lot since I've took over the Historical Association.

ER: Okay, so this will probably take about an hour and twenty minutes or an hour and a half or so since there's two people and I like to have ample time for people to get out stories and things like that. So I'm just going to start off with some simple questions such as your name and birth date, just to have the record.

SS: Sallie Smith, 12/28/1948

ER: How do you spell Sallie?

SS: S.A.L.L.I.E.

FS: I'm Fred Smith, 8/20/47

ER: Okay, and your occupations?

FS: Both retired...and volunteers.

ER: And volunteers?

SS: We're retired but do a lot of volunteer work.

ER: Okay, so how long have you lived in the area?

SS: I was born within two miles of where I currently live. We did move away for about twenty years but we moved back in 1994...so we've been there right at twenty years again.

ER: Okay.

SS: And he lived in Providence. I lived in Blanch, and he lived in Providence.

ER: Okay, so what made you leave for, you said around twenty years, both of you together left for twenty years?

FS: Well I joined the post office after Vietnam ended and the marine thing, so I had to go to Greensboro to find a job so...we worked in Greensboro from...We moved there in October of 1971 and we moved back in really July of 1993 is when we moved back to Yanceyville.

ER: Okay.

FS: But I came back as post master of Yanceyville too...so that's why.

ER: Okay.

SS: We left for his job opportunities

ER: Right. Okay. So what did you do after the move?

SS: I stayed home for a few months then I went to work for Guilford Mills, where I worked for 24 and a half years.

ER: Okay. Did you ever work at the mills here?

SS: Yeah, I worked in Dan River for about a year and a half.

ER: Okay. What was your position there?

SS: A creeler.

ER: A what?

SS: A creeler.

ER: Okay, could you explain that a little bit for me?

SS: Mmm...you put the bobbins of yarn in this huge, long machine and you have to tie it and when it comes up off of the spools it goes up onto a round thing they call cheese and then after it got to a certain size you would have to take that cheese off and tie it and all that stuff.

ER: Okay.

SS: My sister was on one side and I was on the other...she ran me to death, because it was a production job...I enjoyed it, then of course I got married so I left.

ER: What years were you working there?

SS: I graduated in 1967, then I went to work, I graduated in June...I was working the end of June of 1967 through 1968.

ER: Okay.

FS: And I worked in Dan River like 1965 to 1966...worked it what they called a cod [*card?*] room, where they run a comber machine where it literally got the seeds out of the cotton when it come in...couple years ago the old part burned down, the building up on the river, next the bridge, that's where I worked, that building right there.

ER: Okay, so only a year or so?

FS: Yeah I worked in that part prior to going into the Marine Corps in 1966.

ER: Okay.

SS: Yeah, I did have a sister that made it almost a life time job.

ER: The one that worked right across from you?

SS: Yeah.

ER: That one? How many brothers and sisters do you have?

SS: I have five brothers and two sisters.

ER: Wow. And where do you fall in that range?

SS: Middle.

ER: The middle?

SS: Right in the middle.

ER: Okay. What about yourself?

FS: I've got one brother that's still alive and two deceased sisters.

ER: Okay. Did your family stay in the area as well or did they move out?

FS: Mine stayed around probably [*unintelligible*] graduated to Danville a little bit.

SS: And mine stayed there in Yanceyville, Blanch area majority.

ER: How did you guys get up to Danville if you were living in North Carolina? Did you both just have your own cars?

FS: Well, that depends. When I worked in Dan River before I went Marine Corps, we had an old bus that...we called it what, the Red Fox?

SS: The Red Fox, I think it was.

FS: Something like that.

SS: [*unintelligible*] McDuffy drove it.

FS: It would leave Yanceyville and pick up people on old 86 when I lived in Providence and it would take you to Schoolfield down where I worked and pick up the mill workers and take them back home each tour, each shift.

ER: Why's it called the Red Fox? *-laughs-*

SS: It's just the name we gave it I think.

FS: I think it's just the name of the old bus then, it's an old tin looking bus like you would see in the movies now back in the 60s or whatever...that's what we rode.

ER: Do you know how long that lasted till?

FS: Well...

SS: Probably in the 70s

FS: Probably early-to-mid 70s...probably.

SS: I would think...yeah.

FS: That was interesting.

ER: So, did you guys know each other growing up?

FS: No.

SS: No. I knew his brother for a brief time in high school but I knew nothing of him.

ER: Did you go to the same schools?

FS: Well I'm a little ahead of her, we went to...when we were going to school, Cobb, we had about three high schools. We had Cobb High School, was for what we call Caswell, I guess as the western part of the county, then we had Bartlett Yancey, then we had Anderson High School on the backside of the southern part of the county, so most of my high schooling before they segregate...

SS: Combined.

FS: Combined was at Cobb and she was at Bartlett Yancey, we were on different side of the county...in the 60s.

ER: So which elementary schools did you guys go to?

SS: I went to BY, Bartlett Yancey and I went to Murphy for about a year and a half.

FS: I went to Providence, Pelham...I even went for one period of my life we moved to Kentucky and went to Dan River High School, well Dan River Middle...well it was Elementary then, it wasn't Middle...and I did go to Dan River High School for a couple years...prior to moving back to Carolina, we were sharecroppers...my parents were sharecroppers and hers were too.

SS: Likewise here.

ER: Oh okay, for tobacco?

FS: Tobacco.

SS: Yes.

ER: Did you guys have to help out at couple times?

SS: Oh yes.

FS: Oh yeah.

SS: Oh yeah...very much so.

FS: Yeah...that was your job.

SS: That was our livelihood.

FS: We didn't have much of a choice

ER: Right.

FS: We didn't have and iPad, an iPod...didn't have all that.

SS: None of that fun stuff they think they've got today.

ER: Did you have specific jobs on the farm just that was yours and your siblings might have had another or did you kind of just...across the board, do a little bit of everything?

FS: Everything.

SS: A little bit of everything.

ER: During high school, elementary school, that kind of thing, were you involved in any sports or clubs or anything?

SS: Myself, I was too busy with home life...the farm, the house...that kind of stuff...as children we had to pitch in and do all of that farm stuff as well to make a living.

FS: I played a little baseball, most of the time I had to go home and work in tobacco or corn or something...so we were very limited in what sports we played and on Saturday we had a local sports thing down in Providence we would play sports there, baseball and all...but not for high school.

ER: What did you do for fun like during high school, whether you would go out to movies or what have you?

SS: Mainly a lot of the fun stuff was generated through the church we went to...with the you know the little socials and stuff and picnics and that kind of stuff...but it was mainly through the church.

FS: Well it seems like you made your fun then because there wasn't a lot of extra activities you could attend unless we went to Yanceyville Friday night and watched the big guys play baseball or something like that or...at a church event...you made your own fun.

ER: And which church do you attend now?

SS: Now we really don't have a current church, we have been to Community Baptist Church...back then when we were growing up it was Welcome Baptist in Blanch that we attended...but right now we're in a limbo as far as churches.

ER: So when you were children did you attend the same church or no because you guys were apart?

FS: No, I was in Providence.

ER: Right.

FS: Providence Baptist.

ER: So, your neighborhoods, could you describe to me a little bit about what they were like growing up?

SS: Rural...very rural...but of course all of the neighbors knew each other and virtually you knew just about everybody in the county, or especially in say your school district...you virtually knew everybody. Now it's different of course but it was slow, easy going...more or less easy going life.

ER: So you like that kind of being able to know everybody?

SS: Oh yeah. It was fun, I mean you knew your neighbors and knew, hey you needed help they were only across the street or down the road a little bit...so it was nice.

FS: I think mostly...we worked a lot in the fields...usually daddy worked us five and a half days a week and Saturday afternoon we could play baseball or cut a yard for five bucks for whatever to get us any money because we didn't have any. But I don't know it was just...we were poor and we didn't know it.

SS: But we're really rich now.

FS: Because a lot of the people in our area were the same as we were, even the black people. There wasn't any difference we always had to work in tobacco because we were sharecroppers and I often say rather than being share croppers; we were really carpetbaggers I think.

ER: Okay, could you explain that I idea a little bit?

FS: Well, you live on a farm for two years, maybe a year and you go to another farm. You pack up everything and you go like we went to Kentuck and lived for several years down there...and you just pack up and move...maybe your parents got mad at that owner or they thought they could make some more money at a...cause then you worked on quarters, either half or a quarter depending on the equipment you had to raise tobacco and sometimes you were at the total control of the guy that owned the land and had the tractor and had the mules and all that...so we were just farm hopping.

SS: And see the farmers...the owners back then would have a house for you to come and live in, just like my granddads farm, we lived on it off and on my whole entire childhood up till I was sixteen or seventeen years old. But when we would move off of granddad's place we would always move into another owner's home and he would provide the home so that was how we were able to jump from one place to the other.

ER: Were those homes pretty consistent wherever you went like a certain type of house architecturally and everything?

SS: Pretty much.

FS: Pretty much. Shacks...some of them were shacks.

ER: Did they have the indoor plumbing?

FS: No.

SS: No.

ER: Outhouse out back? *-laughs-*

SS: I didn't have indoor plumbing till I was eighteen years old. It was all outdoor.

ER: We didn't have indoor plumbing till I was four. I had to go out back and check for snakes and everything.

FS: Oh yeah.

ER: Yeah. *-laughs-*

SS: I don't think we as kids, we didn't think about those things as much because we were out in nature all the time, outdoors all the time, so we didn't think about it like we do today now...I double check today, but then it was just a part of life.

FS: My great-great grandparents lived here in town then and we would visit them sometimes and it was like going to a place where people really had money even though they didn't because they had the indoor water and had a commode ...and it was just something we had no...we didn't know what it was.

ER: So how did they make their money to be able to live in town and everything instead of out with the...?

FS: My great granddaddy was a professional carpenter and cabinet maker here in town, which he's been deceased probably forty years, but that's how he made his money, he was a craftsman right here in Danville.

ER: So, did you both know that you didn't want to work with tobacco when you got older?

SS: After we left, yeah.

FS: I'll tell you my commitment, but you go ahead and tell yours...hers.

SS: No, I just...after I went to public work I said tobacco is not it anymore. I think it taught us a valuable lesson though; how to work hard for what you got and that working gave you your means of living...of your livelihood at the time...even now. "Always put your best foot forward and do your best job," that's what momma and daddy always told us.

ER: Would you say that people today are trying to live beyond their means?

SS: Definitely. Oh yeah, and I think society gives it to them, gives them that opportunity without them ever sitting down and look and say, "Do I really need this? Do I really have the means to pay for this?" I think that's the reason a lot of them get in trouble now.

ER: So did your area, your neck of the woods down in Providence, was it any different from the way that she described hers with the small town field and everything?

FS: Well didn't even have a town, we just had the community. But when I joined the Marine Corps in like June of 66, May or June, and I went in on a 120 day delay plan I actually went in on the end of September I went to Ellis Island. But I made a commitment when I left Providence that the closest I was going to get to a stick of tobacco or any tobacco was a Dutch Master cigar. And so far that's the closest I've gotten. I was just sick of tobacco and I didn't want any more of it and I hope I never have to go back to it...but it was a means of support to me, but I remember the last year we farmed, my daddy gave my brother and I one acre of tobacco. At the end of the year we got \$20 a piece after we paid the fertilizer bill and all this...no, there's got to be something better than this,

ER: Yeah because even \$20 back then wouldn't have been...

FS: No.

SS: Chicken feed as they called it.

ER: So besides tobacco on your homesteads, did you have gardens and that kind of thing?

SS: Oh yes, yeah.

FS: We raised our pigs, cows, we owned milk, a complete garden, momma canned, we didn't have freezers then, you canned it all back then...of course we had our own milk, you would slaughter the hogs in the fall then you would salt, then down and you would have meat all winter long. So we were probably 90 percent self-efficient. Some of the stuff you had to get at a dried goods store or wherever.

SS: It was likewise on this side of the family. I mean we did the very same thing. As far as gardening, daddy and momma would plant huge amounts of stuff. I remember one time we picked up...went to the garden and picked a washtub full of butter beans and of course who had the...

ER: Shell them? *-laughs-*

SS: Shell them, me! And then dad planted the sweet potatoes one year. I think we had enough for the whole Caswell county. I ain't never gotten so tired of getting up potatoes in my life. But no, we had abundances as far as food. We was always able to grow our own crops.

ER: Did you keep that tradition when you two married and got your own place?

FS: Well we always had a little garden, but never big.

SS: Nothing like mom and dad's. No.

FS: No. Well we started out until our children were born, which we still just have a small garden.

SS: We have a little box garden outback now, but that's about it.

ER: And how many children do you have?

FS: We have two sons and a new granddaughter.

ER: Congratulations.

FS: What, three weeks old?

SS: Yeah.

FS: Three weeks old.

ER: Wow that is pretty young. *-laughs-*

FS: First grandchild.

SS: Very excited. *-laughs-*

ER: Are they in the area or did they move out?

FS: Our oldest son will be 44 in August. He lives in Raleigh and works with Whole Foods, a store in Cary which is not far away. Our youngest son lives in Rockingham County and of course him and his wife both work in Greensboro.

ER: Okay, and he's the one with the...

FS: He's the one with the grandchild.

ER: Okay. So how have you seen your neighborhoods change from when you grew up to today?

SS: As far as my neighborhood that I grew up in, it's virtually the same. I mean there's a few different homes or there's a business on granddad's old farm, but other than that it's pretty much the same, it's still farmland, still vegetable gardens and stuff. But now Yanceyville has changed, the town...the county seat has changed somewhat. We do have, what is it two stoplights now?

FS: We have three in the county and two in Yanceyville.

SS: Two in Yanceyville and one in Milton. But Yanceyville is still...it's growing small, but nothing by leaps and bounds, but it's a nice area. It's laidback, quiet, if you want that kind of life come to Caswell County.

FS: Well, Providence is virtually the same. Where the old school was, where I went to elementary school, now there's a fire department there and another large building which houses a nice church I guess, but other than that it's basically the same when you drive through. Now you probably got more big time farmers and back then we had...if you were a farmer like we were you very seldom had over six acres of land because you couldn't work it. And now you've got farmers who've got 100 acres or 150 acres of tobacco, so I think that's the biggest thing. But if you drive through Providence right now, it looks basically the same as it did in 1966 when I lived in Providence...it's basically the same.

SS: It's not changed much.

FS: Now Yanceyville where we live now has really grown town, because we got Bojangles, we got Hardees, we got all grades of places to eat, we got a Family Dollar, we got a Dollar General. Years ago everything was downtown before the new 86 in the mid 70s went through because you had to drive through downtown. Now of course, I guess you would call it a bypass, but you really bypass the old area. We still have some small shops down there, but most of us are out on the new 86 as we call it.

ER: So do you think downtown has suffered or think it has just changed?

FS: Suffered.

SS: It's suffered. We're trying to get some life back into it, but it's hard.

FS: We noticed years ago when we used to go to Myrtle Beach, when we started bypassing these little towns, how the towns "dried up." Yanceyville's got a lot of that "drying up" and during that period when the new road was built out, because it brought in business for that area but not the downtown part.

SS: Because 86 from Danville to Hillsboro to Durham, it's busy. I mean we go that route quite often now, but 86 is a main throughway. But coming through Yanceyville, you bypass it unless you happen to see something...a sign or something you want to go and stop and look at.

FS: See in Hills Burg, you still drive up through Hillsboro, but when you get to smaller towns like Providence, you bypass Providence and Yanceyville and you miss them.

ER: So you have to have a point basically to go there?

FS: Yeah.

ER: So if you were going to tell somebody who's never been to the area why they should visit Yanceyville, what would you say?

SS: We have one of the oldest historical court houses downtown and we have lots to see if people would just stop. We have a history museum there and it's lots to do and of course the Civic Center is there and unfortunately more from Danville and Burlington come to the events there than the local people. They just don't know what they're missing.

ER: Do you know why that is?

SS: Not really.

FS: I guess it's the old adage, "You can't see the forest for the trees," it's got a lot to do with that. And from statistics I've heard like 8 percent of casual people attend the art shows and the main shows that come to town and they have some big time shows...

SS: They've had some great shows.

FS: ...That come to the Civic Center, but the rest of them come from Pennsylvania, Halifax, Burlington, Reeds or Rockingham County and they come in there, but I guess...you know if you were to go home and look at your front yard, other people see things that you don't see. So that's basically the way it is when you live in Yanceyville proper or Caswell County. You just don't see what you got.

SS: I think that's just about in any state as well. While you're living in that state you may not go and see what's there to see, you'll go across the line to see what's there, but in your own local area you just don't pay attention to it.

FS: Like I think 2011 was the first time we ever went to Outer Banks.

SS: Yeah.

FS: You know we've been to Carolina Beach or Myrtle Beach, but we had never been to the Outer Banks in North Carolina, it's one of the prettiest spots in the world I think.

SS: It's gorgeous

ER: Yeah.

SS: Gorgeous.

FS: But we didn't go until 2011 and I was like 57 years old or whatever, something like that when I first went there.

ER: Wow.

SS: It's amazing.

FS: We would go elsewhere, but we didn't go to the Outer Banks.

ER: Right, but just not in your own state.

FS: Yeah.

ER: What part of the Outer Banks did you go to?

FS: Rodanthe, we went all over. We went from Currituck all the way to...what was it?

SS: Hatteras?

FS: Hatteras, no not Hatteras. The one below Hatteras.

SS: Oh, gee.

FS: Anyway, we toured them all.

SS: We toured the whole...what was it? Interstate 12 or whatever it's called? I12?

FS: On 12, we got on the ferry and went from Ocracoke.

SS: We were lucky to go down there and spent a full week prior to the hurricane, the first hurricane that came through there and washed it away. And then we went back when? About a year and a half ago?

FS: Yeah.

SS: And of course we went right after the second hurricane had come. It did a lot of damage...a lot.

FS: Currituck all the way to Ocracoke Island, the end of it.

SS: Yeah.

ER: I visited Kitty Hawk.

FS: Yeah we stayed at Kitty Hawk a couple years back.

SS: It's beautiful down there.

FS: But we camped. We took the RV the first time to Rodanthe and stayed in the RV.

ER: Okay, does Caswell have any nice camping areas? I like to camp myself.

FS: Well they've got one they share with a Person County with HycoLake, but other than that that's the only campground in the county.

ER: Did either of you go to college or anything post secondary after high school besides the, and we're going to talk about the military service?

FS: I went two years to night school for my business degree in business which may have helped me out a little bit in my postal career, I don't know I'm trying to look back and see if it did but...

ER: Where was that at?

FS: Postal career?

ER: No the...yeah the night school you took classes at.

FS: Night school? I went to Jefferson College in Greensboro, it was a night school. I think it turned into King's College not too many years after I graduated in what 72? 73?

SS: It's right after we went to Greensboro.

ER: So this was after you service?

FS: Oh yeah.

ER: Did you use you GI Bill to help pay for that?

FS: I did.

SS: Oh yeah.

FS: I did, yeah.

ER: Okay.

FS: Yeah. It helped me out a lot. Three nights a week for about 27 months I think I went.

ER: And you think it sorta, kinda, maybe paid off? *-laughs-*

FS: Yeah a little bit.

SS: I think it did.

FS: Because in my job in the post office I wound up being a post master for 20 years so I had to you know do accounting and take care of the money and all that stuff, so I guess it worked out a little bit.

ER: How did you land in that job?

FS: After I got from Vietnam...when I got from Vietnam in 68, April of 68, I got home from Vietnam and they had the military...had a thing they called "Project Transition". They were trying to train some of us guys to go out into civilian life and like a buddy of mine, he took up motel management...motel, hotel management. I took up the post office where you would go...you would get instructed on what the post office was and they would help you take the test or give the test to you, not help you take it. You had to take the test and pass it to get on the postal list then and then you could apply for two or three towns and get on their list and get hired after you got out. So I did and I think it was probably the early part of 69 I got in on that and I applied for Greensboro and Burlington and a couple of other areas. Then in February of 1970 I got hired as Greensboro's letter carrier. I walked on the streets for 13 years before going into management and I spent 32 years and eight months in the post office and I retired as postmaster of Yanceyville...of course my hometown now but...32 years and eight months.

ER: And what year did you retire?

FS: 2002

ER: 2002. Okay, did you take any classes or anything or did you go straight into the workforce?

SS: I took a couple courses...different courses at PCC and stuff but nothing as far as college, no. I became a mother and started being motherhood and went to work because of them.

ER: What year did you enter the military?

FS: 1966. I joined I think it was either late May or early June. They had 120 day delays program then that you could join and get your affairs in order before you go in. I joined the marines because I did not want to be in the army. I knew I was going to Vietnam, I just knew it. And the army was trying to draft me and I did not want to be a soldier, I wanted to be a marine. So I actually went in on September 28th of 1966, I went to Parris Island [Illegible 30:10] in South Carolina. From there I moved back to Camp Lejeune for some more training. On January 7th of

1967 I flew out to California to Camp Pendleton and on March 27th of 67 I landed in Vietnam and I left there April 18th of 1968 and came back to Camp Lejeune. We met, what May the 4th?

SS: Yeah.

FS: May the 4th, 3 and a half months we dated then we got married in August of 1968 and we went to Camp Lejeune together. Then we got out in September of 69...out of the marines in 69.

ER: Did you enter with somebody or was it just your idea to go?

FS: No. No I came to Danville and talked to the recruiters in the old post office. I think now they're at the mall, but the recruiters then were at the old post office. The army was about to draft me and I said no way I'm going into the army, so I didn't. I wanted to be a marine and I'm still a marine, I signed up and I've never regretted a day of it.

ER: What were your duties and rank and everything in the marines?

FS: Well you go in as a PFC, well you're going as a Private E1 and I got back home in 18 months I made E5 which was Sergeant in a little less than 18 months, so I made it 2nd quickest of anybody in our battalion at the time...2nd quickest, but I got most of that in Vietnam where I got wounded twice in Vietnam. But when I got back to Camp Lejeune as an E5 Sergeant, I was Platoon Sergeant for headquarters platoon until up in 69.

ER: Why do you think you got promoted so quickly?

FS: Well I was a squared away marine. I did my job and I guess I did my job well. I enjoyed what I...I mean I loved the marines I love it right now, I'd have stayed in it if it wasn't for Vietnam, I wasn't going back over there because when I got out in 69 they offered me...I was already on the E6 rules. I had 18 months in grade for that. They offered me Choice of Duty Station for 2 years, Embassy Duty, they wined and dined me for Embassy Duty and I said "no I'm not going." I was pretty squared away as a marine. Then they offered me \$5,200 cash too in 69 that was a whole lot of money, three thousand of dollars you can buy a nice car in 69. But I said, "No I'm going home." And even on my DD214 on the bottom it says I was "undecided," I wasn't "undecided." I wasn't going back to Vietnam, so I never was undecided.

ER: No, they wanted to keep you.

FS: That had something to do with it there.

SS: Yeah, because we've been married.

FS: We've been married, but I loved the marines.

SS: Still does.

ER: If you don't mind me asking, how were you wounded?

FS: I got two wounds, I hit...I was amphibious, I drove what they call an Amtrak, which now if you see Afghanistan and Iraq those big vehicles going out through the desert and all, most of them are Amtraks instead of tanks. I think they've had two different versions since I got out. Of course now they run faster, better equipped. We basically had about the same ones that they used in Korea when we went to Vietnam, basically the same vehicle. But I hit three land mines while I was there and my arm was hanging over the side and the land mine hit C4 pellets all in my arm, which over the years it's healed up. Then we got into a fire fight one other time and on top of our tractor was a bunker with sand bags around it with a 30 caliber and either a bullet hit me here or a piece of scrap metal split my whole bottom chin. I think it was scrap metal but we got ambushed. So that was my...two minor wounds really compared to what a lot of guys got.

ER: Now when you came back did you face any backlash? I know that it was controversial.

FS: Nope. Luckily I landed in California at...we landed at an air force base, in Travis Air Force Base. We landed there on August 19th I think it was in 68 the next day because we left on April 18th [Note: I believe he meant they landed on April 19th, not August.] When we landed in the Travis Air Force Base it was a Friday afternoon. So they told us when we got...because of the protestors and the flower kids they couldn't be on base, well I didn't see any of those. Now when we got there they told us to make money before we can process to give you some money to get home, but I had \$1,200 in my pocket I said "I'm going home." So 5 of us got borrowed tickets and we got a cab and drove to San Francisco to the National Airport with the cab and we bought our tickets and came home. Now we saw some flower kids as we were coming through near the airport, but I really had no protestors or anything, not even when I landed in Raleigh. I saw none of those.

ER: Did either of your sons think about joining the military?

SS: Our oldest son did, he went in the Navy.

FS: And Chad wanted to be a marine.

SS: He wanted tom but he had some hip problems as a child so he didn't go.

FS: Yeah my youngest son, he wanted to go in the marines like his daddy but he could have never passed the physical. Visibility, he had that.

ER: So you two met between deployments?

FS: Well after I got back.

ER: After you got back, okay.

FS: Yeah I got back April 18th...well I left April 18th and I got back April 21st of 68 on Sunday. We mat May the 4th where I was...where my parents were living was like a duplex I guess you would say. And the lady who lived next door, her daughter at Dan River Mills.

SS: With me.

FS: With her, and she told her, "Well we got Sunday school picnic because of something."

SS: Well she said she had a friend that was just coming back from service and she wanted me to meet him. And I said "Okay," and I told her about this church picnic I figured you know, that would be safe. So I told her "Alright if he wants to meet me I mean at the church picnic, we can meet and go to the church picnic." That's how it started. It was a blind date. I had never seen him before.

FS: May the 4th 68.

SS: Three months later...yeah.

ER: Three months?

SS: Three and a half months later we were married. As of August this year, it will be 46 years.

ER: Wow, congratulations.

SS: That's a milestone today though with the kids nowadays and marriages, they just...They don't value their marriage vows.

ER: So now would three months still have been considered fairly quick then to everybody or was your family shocked? *-laughs-*

FS: Oh yeah.

SS: Oh yes! Yeah, very much so. Let's don't go there. *-laughs-*

ER: No? *-laughs-*

FS: We were both of age.

SS: We were both of age and I think both of us was ready to get married. I was and I think he was.

FS: Well I just, at that time when you sneaked off and got married...

SS: Eloped...

FS: We really didn't sneak off because we were both of age, we could do whatever we want and on Labor Day weekend, I had a 96 hour pass I guess it was four days off...you know, big deal. But then when we came home Sunday afternoon I guess it was, her daddy knew she was pregnant you know this is 1968.

SS: Two years later though, took a long time. *-laughs-*

FS: Two years down the road on the day our first son was born. Two years.

SS: On our anniversary.

ER: So where did you get married?

SS: Jacksonville.

FS: North Carolina.

SS: Right there at Camp Lejeune.

FS: Just [*Unitelligible*]

SS: I had my girlfriend to go with me and he had a buddy that he had met in Vietnam and he was his Best Man and she was mine...Matron of Honor, or whatever you want to call it, it was just the two of us or two of them and we all struck out to Jacksonville and we got married. They came home and we stayed a day or two.

ER: Did you wear a dress or did you just...?

SS: I only wore a little hat veil and I had a navy blue suit and a white blouse. I still got the suit, but it don't fit *-laughs-*. Not when I was weighing only 125 pounds then. But no I still got it and my oldest son says "Momma when you pass on I want that suit," and I said "It's there, you know where it's at." It's a little tiny suit.

ER: Did you guys ever get a real honeymoon later? Just the two days? That was what you called that?

SS: No. I think back then you where more or less satisfied with what you had.

FS: Everybody didn't take honeymoons...well we couldn't afford it anyway.

SS: We just, no.

FS: With what I made and you didn't make a lot of money then.

SS: He went back to Camp Lejeune and then I went back to work at Dan River then we did that for several months and then he finally says "You come to Camp Lejeune," so we moved down there.

ER: Were you able to stay together before like...I don't know if you had your own place before you guys got married. No?

FS: We didn't have a place

SS: I stayed with my mom and dad.

ER: So are your childhood friends still in the area or did they move on to?

FS: Some of them are.

SS: Some of them, yeah.

FS: A lot of mine have passed away. A lot of the guys are gone, but there's still a few around I see occasionally, but not that many of them that I grew up with because I live in Yanceyville now instead of Providence. But when I grew up in Providence we had maybe 10 or 12 others that partied together on Friday and Saturday night when we got old and stuff like that, but there's only a few left like that, most of them are deceased.

SS: My closest girlfriend, she's now living in Providence, her and her husband. But all the others are still around too. And last...no, two and a half years ago we had the 45th reunion and I and another lady was in charge of it and we had a good crowd and everybody was so excited to see each other and what I did was make nametags and put pictures of us as we graduated and we all had those nametags and if it hadn't have been for that, we wouldn't have known each other.

ER: You wouldn't have...no.

SS: No, some of them had changed drastically.

ER: How many people attended that you think?

SS: All together it was about 95 of us, but all of that wasn't only classmates, it was spouses and whatever but see a lot of them...a lot of my classmates married classmates. We was just in that small community and that's part of it, we had I think was two or three girls that actually got married prior to graduation, but they're still together so all those years too.

ER: Wow. So you said two years after you got married, you had your first son. How far apart are your children? In terms of...

SS: 10 years...almost 10 years.

FS: 10 years.

ER: Okay, did you enter the workforce before or between them or just after because I know you said you stayed at home.

SS: I worked some when we first got back to Yanceyville after he got out of service at Royal Hosiery. Then after I had the first child I stayed at home and then I did go back to work when he was born. But then of course, he went to work at Greensboro at the post office so we moved up there and I was out of work maybe a year maybe. And then went to work at Guilford Mills.

ER: Okay. What are you both involved in today in the community?

SS: Too much *-laughs-*. Not really, not really.

FS: [*Unintelligible*] tell her part.

SS: We have been involved in Relay For Life, we gave that up just a couple years ago. We were involved in that...I was involved in 11 years straight, he was involved 12. Which it was a joy, we

thoroughly enjoyed it. But I think like anything, there are times when you get burnt out and you need to change so that's what we did. And I have been on the board of United Way for a while and I was on the board of the Chamber of Commerce and a ladies organization there. And now I am currently the president of the Historical Association there in Yanceyville. I volunteer at the museum at least once a...probably just about once a week every two to three weeks. I'm getting very active in that.

ER: Right, well I volunteered there last summer.

SS: Did you?!

ER: I did, with one other intern. We worked with Sterling a lot...

SS: Oh okay! Cool! Yeah!

ER: ...On the plan for maybe moving things around a little bit and having stuff out on that back porch, that kind of thing. We just would volunteer there and do genealogy, like research and stuff.

SS: Yeah I knew that he was working with someone but I didn't know...yeah cool.

ER: Yeah, yeah. So I've been down there. *-laughs-*

SS: Thank you.

ER: So what are you involved in?

FS: Well when I moved...when we moved back to Yanceyville in 93, I was postmaster. The post office encourages you to be a part of your community. So I joined the Chamber of Commerce, a Rotary Club, I was Rotary Club president and Chamber president 1995 and 1996 together. And of course for 12 years I was in charge of all the set ups, logistics for Relay for Life. We gave it up several years ago, we just burnt plum out. Then...God I don't know how many boards I've been in...

SS: Quite a few boards.

FS: I guess the most active thing I'm in now is I'm on the Board of Elections for the county. Of course we got another primary coming up. I'm also commander of the VFW. Prior to coming to Yanceyville I didn't have anything to do at Veterans Organizations and the reason being, when I first got home from Vietnam we moved to Greensboro. I was invited by some of my coworkers

to go to a Vietnam...Vietnam Veterans of America Organization. I went to a couple of those and all of the guys had their hands out, wanting help or freebies or whatever and I didn't enjoy that, I don't believe in that. So I just dropped it because I put Vietnam Veterans of America in with the American Legend of VFW and the DAV and the Marine Corps League, I put them all in one hat and that was wrong. So when we moved back to Greensboro...I mean to Yanceyville in 1993 I think I got involved in 1995, joined the VFW and the American Legend. Now I'm in four of them. Of course I'm the commander of the VFW in our county, I'm in the American Legend, I'm in the Disabled Vets, in Person County which covers Caswell and I'm in the Marine Corps League out in Burlington. But I guess that's my duty. I'm also in the Senior Center Board, Advisory Board, I do a lot of work on that. She and I together have got a big task every year. We do Memorial Day and Veterans Day, were in charge of that, well I'm charge and she drags along and helps me. But we do that every year and this past Memorial Day we had over 200 in the old historic court house.

SS: If you read your Danville register on Monday, you would have seen an article about our Memorial Day Service, which turned out really good.

FS: Tuesday. But anyway we do a lot of work on it. It takes a lot of work. I served on the Town Council in Yanceyville eight years also. I don't know what else I've done.

SS: What he does, I support him. It's like almost getting two for one. *-laughs-*

FS: I've done a lot of things. Now I'm doing the Veterans Interviews, I'm in charge. What I do with the other interviewer from Chapel Hill comes up, I scheduled him to do interviews. In other words I go out and select the veterans to interview, we do that through word of mouth mainly because we put articles in the paper, but it helps a little bit, but it's mainly word of mouth. We've interviewed guys from I guess 40 minutes to...we had one guy what 19 hours?

SS: 19 hours.

ER: Not straight? *-laughs-*

FS: No.

SS: No.

FS: No we do most of them in three hour implements. But I don't know what those guys talked about, I'm glad I didn't get that interview. We do that mainly for the North Carolina Archives and I keep a copy for our VFW and then maybe in the future...in the future we may make that

part of the library where people can come in here and view these videos. I was the first one done April 23rd of 2013 in our county and then we did 85 since then.

ER: Wow.

FS: Maybe at some point Rhonda at the library, we can put...they can come in and view them there.

ER: Definitely.

FS: Mine was like 45 minutes for my total interview. We've had regular veterans, we've had Korean veterans, we had World War II, we've had a lot of Vietnam veterans because that's most of us around, there's not a whole lot of WWII veterans left that can get out and do interviews. We have went through houses and interviewed people so don't only do them at the court house but we go out and visit homes too. But that's one of my main goals now.

ER: So is it just you and another person you said working? Two?

FS: Right now in our county. Now we've got Rusty and he's the guy from Chapel Hill, he's a Vietnam veteran. He's got three other people in the Durham and we're working on people in Mebane so we can branch out and get more. At one time we were the only ones...he and I were the only ones that stayed in our [*unintelligible*] of doing this, doing the interviews, the only ones. Now we got 5 and as far as we know we may be the ones in the United States doing exactly what we're doing. You've got some guys that just interview WWII vets, you've got some others that just do Vietnam vets. We do any veteran, you don't have to be in combat you just have to wear the uniform. So we'll take any veteran and interview them if they either live in North Carolina or were born in North Carolina. I've interviewed guys from Danville but they were born in Carolina.

ER: Have you interviewed any women?

FS: Yes we have.

SS: Oh yeah.

FS: Plenty. We seek them out really more than we do normal veterans because most of them you never know about them. We've probably interviewed out of the 85 probably 15...I'd say at least 15 of them have been women.

ER: What war were they mainly centered in?

FS: The ones we interviewed I don't know whether...only a couple of them have been in like Iraq and Afghanistan but most of them were just military, not in combat.

ER: And so these were local people or maybe they just happen to land here?

FS: No. They're local.

SS: Local.

ER: Local? Okay.

FS: The one lady...one of the last ones we interviewed before I started calling it off because of my illness, but she is out in Colorado. She was a specialist where we store a lot of stuff people don't know we got stored to fight a war with, where they push some buttons and send things out, that was one of her jobs.

ER: Wow.

FS: And we didn't know all this until we did the interview. One other guy I tell you we interviewed, he's 97 years old now I think. He lived in Providence and he knew me when I was a little cotton top white haired guy before it turned grey. But he knew me then and we went to interview him and I had heard about him seeing the testing of the atomic bomb but he was stationed in New Mexico...not New Mexico, Fort Bliss Texas I think and he was a truck driver. He had four or five high ranking officials come in the night prior and he had to take them out to New Mexico to the testing facility and he dropped them off and came back. Well the next morning they tested the atomic bomb and he saw the big mushroom the next morning at 5:30. We hear those stories from the veterans from all wars and he never served in Germany or anywhere in WWII other than being in that area.

ER: Did he describe how he felt when he saw it?

FS: Yeah. They actually were told then that it was an explosion. Nobody knew that they were testing to drop the big one...the two big ones on Nagasaki and Hiroshima but they knew something was going on. You know when you take four or five high ranking officials out to the middle of the desert and drop them off you know something is going on. But the next morning there was a giant ammunition explosion that's what it was.

ER: That's what they were told?

FS: Yeah that's what he was told.

ER: Do you guys do both video and audio or just audio?

FS: Just like you're doing right now.

ER: Just like this?

FS: The front of it, she does mine for me. She puts whether you in the marines, army, navy whatever and your name and all like a scroll and then we go into the interview.

SS: Whichever service it is I'll play a segment of their song.

FS: The anthem, yeah.

ER: That's great. Who has to do the transcribing? *-all laugh-*

FS: She has to do the computer work, I do the interview.

SS: Yeah.

ER: Okay.

FS: Yeah she does it on the computer.

ER: Okay so do you guys...

FS: She makes a DVD.

ER: Do you have to type it all up or is that...

FS: No.

SS: No.

FS: It's all right there in the package.

SS: It's only on video.

FS: It's all digital.

SS: Only on video.

FS: It's all digital.

ER: Yeah because we have to type all...like we have it on digital too but just so there's like a written transcription we have to type it all up.

SS: Oh wow, you have to do all that too?

ER: Yeah

FS: We don't do that.

SS: Oh wow, no.

FS: The way we save our ideas is we send two copies to the archives. I keep a copy and Rusty, he gets a copy. So we've gotten at least four copies that we can draw from...DVD's.

SS: Plus the individual gets a copy.

FS: Individual gets unlimited amount.

ER: Gets a copy. Right, that's great.

SS: So they can share with their families.

ER: Have you guys been to the Tank Museum?

FS: I have.

SS: Oh yes.

FS: Several times.

SS: He has, I haven't.

FS: I've taken...our district VFW has seven posts, Durham, Chapel Hill, Mebane, Henderson, Butner, anyway seven of us and I've gotten all of those together, all of us guys and we've been up there a couple times as a group and gone through there. We've been to the D-Day...

SS: It was mostly press too.

FS: We've been to the D-Day Memorial as a group, we've been to DC as a group.

ER: Do you have a favorite museum in DC?

FS: Vietnam Wall is my favorite place.

ER: Favorite memorial, yeah.

SS: Yes.

ER: I just went up there for Memorial Day weekend.

SS: Oh did you?

ER: Yeah the Rolling Thunder you know going on and all that.

FS: See we can never go because we are doing our own...

SS: Busy with the ...

ER: Oh of course, you got commitments down here. Yeah that was kind of an on the whim thing for me to go there.

SS: His other thing is the Marine Corps Museum.

FS: Yeah Marine Corps Museum was a museum of the Marine Corps...Triangle Quantico.

SS: He loves that. You ever been there?

ER: I have not.

SS: Next time you go, stop, it's on the way.

FS: It hangs over 95 when you come up you know

SS: Very impressive.

FS: Very impressive.

ER: Okay, I'll have to do that. So if you could describe growing up in the Dan River Region in 3 words what would they be? *-laughs-* I'll give you a minute to think about it.

FS: I would say: Country...I would say...Laidback some.

SS: That was a thought, yeah.

FS: If you feel better lived in another place that is more progressive I guess you would stay. Laidback and probably family driven.

ER: Okay.

SS: Most definitely.

ER: Do you have the same ones or do you want to create your own ones?

[Timestamp: 56:19] **SS:** I would say virtually the same. Matter of fact, when we moved away and came back those 20 years, I told the people there who I was acquainted with in Greensboro, I said "I went back in time 20 years," they said "What?" I said "I did," at that time I made a joke of it but it was true. The Amish had come to live in the area, actually they moved and bought my granddads farm and they were living there and of course they had the horse and buggies and I told myself "I went back so far in time the people are driving horse and buggies down here," they thought "Okay." But anyway, coming back here I went to work for the County of Caswell and finance office and at that time they don't have what I called the mainframe of a computer, you didn't have your little PCs and whatever. Well in Greensboro, we did have that, we had a PC and when I got here I said "Ya'll don't have your own computers?" "No." I said "Uh-oh I'm in trouble". So I actually...virtually as far as Excel, taught some of them in my local office there how to use some of it. And I thought "Oh well, me teaching somebody, yeah," It was pretty neat.

FS: But if you go back to...if you pull the census around 1900 to now, it probably hasn't been 3,000 people who've changed up or down since 1900. So Caswell basically stayed the same. The biggest difference with Caswell is that 75 percent of people go outside of the county to work because we don't have an industry anymore, we just have tobacco and stuff like that farming.

SS: It's become I think...as far as the outside of Yanceyville...the suburbs or whatever you want to call it, has become a bedroom community for the outside counties and locations.

ER: What industries besides tobacco were there that now are missing?

FS: Oh yeah Royal Textiles, you had the textile [*unintelligible*] Prospect Hill.

SS: You had Hanover Mills for a number of years.

FS: Yeah Hanover Mills.

SS: The last few years they were operation of course different mills bought those up. But mainly just...

FS: The Royal Hosing Mill...and actually it's not a Hosiery Mill anymore.

SS: But it's still going.

FS: It's still going. They're making a lot of governmental [*unintelligible*] for t-shirts and military type uniforms, that's what they do there. But that's one of the only businesses that was there then that both of us worked at that is still there, the rest of them are gone. That's really the...other than the prison departments we got plenty of employees there and in the school system, but as far as a manufacturing business being there when we got back from Vietnam...when we got out of the Marine Corps, that's the only one left.

ER: Do you think that these industries are part of the key for sustainability in the future or do you think it's going to be more so replaced by the different types of small shops and that kind of growth?

FS: I don't see Caswell growing in businesses because we don't have money to pay for incentives. Like Guilford County, Wade, Mecklenburg...

SS: Even to here now.

FS: Even to southeast Virginia, we just don't have the money to do that and it takes money...you have to pay people to come in a large business or they just don't come. Another thing, we really don't have a super highway that goes through the county other than 29, it's through the west and northwest part of the county. 86...they've been talking about for what 30 years? For widening it.

SS: A long time.

FS: All the way to Research Triangle Park. So if that ever happens one of these years, which we will probably never see it at the rate it's going because of the economy. But that could open up Caswell a bunch if that happened.

ER: So you do see it growing though?

FS: I don't see it growing.

ER: No you don't?

SS: Not a lot, no.

FS: Not a lot.

SS: Unfortunately there's some in the county that don't want to see it change. If they could move it back in years, they would instead of going forward. Some of these folks, they just don't like change.

FS: When we first moved back in 1993...and of course we were from Guilford County, a progressive county in Carolina. We thought that...I even told people "Maybe a few good funerals would change this."

SS: Fred! *-laughs-*

FS: Would change this...it didn't.

ER: No.

SS: They just don't want it to grow.

FS: I'll give you one example, I won't call names. But we have a guy there that owned like a hardware appliance store and all this and we bought our appliances from him and for our house when we remodeled. And I said "You know if they ever widen 86 out here, this will come right by your business and your business will grow." And his comment was "I got enough now of business." That was his comment! So that's the mentality of a lot of the older...older than us, that's the mentality of a lot of the people in the county.

SS: You see unfortunately now with our high school graduates, they have to go outside of the county to make any money. Of course a few of them are able to come back and find a job, but it's not going to pay what the surrounding counties are going to pay.

FS: Some come back to retire.

SS: Yeah.

FS: After retirement.

SS: Yeah after retirement.

ER: Well cost of living is probably a little bit cheaper maybe if that makes sense.

FS: Well it is.

SS: It is.

FS: In reality, when we moved back in 1993, we got a pay raise but we really didn't. We got a pay raise because we didn't have to pay for this compared to Guilford County. But the disadvantage of it is you got to drive to Danville or Burlington or Reidsville to get to a nice restaurant other than a fast food restaurant or to shop at the mall or whatever.

SS: See that's the way it's always been for the folks in Caswell County. You had to cross the state line into Virginia in order to do stuff or see things or go to eat and it's still that way.

ER: Do you think in general Caswell feels like it's a part of Virginia or North Carolina in terms of mentality?

FS: The northern part is attached to here.

SS: Yeah.

FS: Like I lived in Providence and my daddy...we didn't even go to Yanceyville, very seldom. Of course she lived very close to Yanceyville so she could go. Very seldom we ever came to Yanceyville, we came to Danville. The streets...right up Loyal Street and all up here used to grocery stores where daddy would charge his groceries and then in fall when he sold his tobacco he would pay them off. Mr. Richardson's store, I'll never forget going into that store. But we would come down because we were like seven miles from Danville rather than going to Yanceyville.

SS: The Christmas Parade here, the fair, any function that you know Danville provided, a lot of Caswell County folks would come across that line to come. It's not that far so this was our entertainment a lot of the time.

FS: It would really be...I don't know how you would ever find out, it could be a guesstimate, but how much money Carolina drops in Danville. They're a big part of the economy here in Danville.

SS: Very much so.

FS: Caswell County. The northern part anyway.

SS: I think we sort of could be considered as the suburb of Danville in some way because this is where everything is, everything is just here.

ER: What store were you talking about on Loyal?

FS: Huh?

ER: What store were you talking about? You said it was like a general store.

FS: Richardson's.

ER: Richardson's?

FS: It's on Loyal. It's an apartment building there now. Do you know where the old Sear's building is?

ER: Mmhmm.

FS: It's down below that this way, it's where those apartments are on that corner.

ER: Okay.

FS: That's where Mr. Richardson's grocery store was. We used to come in there and charge our groceries and in the fall daddy would come and pay them off. They just write them down.

SS: What was that farmers market thing down here? Was it Craghead?

FS: No it wasn't Craghead...I know it was over yonder next to the old armory, behind the Capital Theatre.

SS: Yeah behind the Capital Theatre.

ER: They used to have one there?

FS: Yeah.

SS: The old farmers market. My grandparents would come and sell produce and stuff on Saturdays. Yeah and my aunt, we would help them collect the garden stuff and bring them in. That was fun. We'd get to go walking down Main Street and that kind of stuff. It was neat.

FS: But Danville was vibrant then too, the Main Street it was vibrant and Lee Theatre.

SS: Well that too goes back to the tobacco, the warehouses were here in Danville. We didn't have any so we had to bring our tobacco across the line in order to sell it.

FS: We used to go over here to on Craghead and Industrial and sell tobacco with my daddy and them to a producers warehouse. I can't think of the names of the others, but that's where we would sell tobacco.

ER: So y'all went to the auctions and stuff?

FS: Oh I did plenty of times.

SS: I only went to a couple. In my family, girls didn't get to do stuff like that, the guys did. The boys did.

ER: Could you describe the atmosphere of the auction a little bit for me?

FS: Well I guess when you take it in you know they got to...we had to bundle it and tie it then and you had to have it real pretty when you laid it out. Now they use pitchforks and everything else.

SS: They sure do. *-laughs-*

FS: But then you would...I mean it would be a...

SS: It's an art almost.

FS: Yeah these guys...you pay this guy, tip him a couple dollars to pack your tobacco in...not crates but anyway pack it and make it look real pretty and pile it and mainly pile it...

SS: Similar to a pile.

FS: And then they put it out for you and you get graded, then the auctioneer would come down through there and everybody would be following the auctioneer, get right in front of him so you could watch him or you'd sit on a pile of tobacco and watch him as a little kid or something. It was... I mean these men were like... they'd have white shirts and ties on a lot of them when they sold tobacco. I mean it was a big deal. I remember back in 1966 if my daddy sold a pile of tobacco for 72 cents a pound, he was making money. Now it's over \$2, you know \$2 plus even after the buyout. It was a big deal to get 70 or 72 cent for a pile of tobacco because you had to grade it and you want the golden leaf you know a pretty blond leaf to lay out, but a lot of it was in a way it was arranged for buyers and the auctioneer to sell.

ER: Do you guys... are you involved with the Bright Leaf Festival?

FS: Yes.

SS: Oh yeah that's another thing. *-laughs-*

FS: That's apart of the Chamber Commerce and we've been supporting it ever since we got back. Every year.

SS: We would come from Greensboro to it every year anyway.

FS: It's very few that they've had that we've missed. We would drive home for that weekend.

ER: You said that you would come up and go to the fair, that they had a little fair.

SS: Oh yeah.

ER: How was that? *-laughs-*

SS: Oh it was exciting for a kid yes.

FS: You know where the Danville fair used to be right?

ER: No, I'm not here originally.

SS: Oh really?

FS: You know where Tractor Supply is on Riverside?

ER: Mmhmm.

SS: Right there.

FS: Right there is where the fairgrounds used to be before they moved way out there.

SS: All of us kids would go in there and we would see those ferris wheels and these lights and smell the aroma of the food and stuff and it was a blast. It was something exceptional for a child.

FS: Yeah that whole bottom was nothing but fair up there.

ER: What would be your favorite childhood memories growing up?

[Timestamp – 1:08] FS: Probably looking back now probably freedom of running through the woods and doing whatever we liked. Back then nobody locked their house, we didn't have a key to the house. Anybody could have walked in but people didn't do things in those days like that. But I would say the freedom to be a kid.

SS: And let your own imagination give you what you need as far as "Let's go play, let's go do this or that." Your imagination took over. You were able to express what you wanted to do only with imagination.

FS: We used to have little lard candles that were about this tall and about the big a round. Well I would take the top off and put me a handle on it, a nail through a piece of wood and that's how I learned how to drive as a kid. I remember that lard bucket, the top. You'd make your own fun then like I said earlier because you didn't have all these toys. My first bike I bought I was 27 years old during a gas crisis when we lived in Greensboro. That was the first bike I had ever owned, when I was 17 years old. But I'd get that old lard can and I'd put a stick of wood on it and I would drive it. That's how I learned how to drive.

ER: Was it hard to learn how to ride a bike at 27?

FS: No.

ER: *-laughs-* No?

FS: No, I'd rode a bike but I didn't own one.

SS: My brother won one at the Caswell fair and all of us kids learned to ride the bike on that. Of course we got a lot of skinned knees and bruises in order to learn it, but he was fortunate enough to win that bike and we were all excited. Very much so.

FS: I think it was the gas crisis of 75, something like that when I bought my first bike. I rode it to work some.

ER: Did either of your households have TV or was that after you had gotten married and moved in together?

SS: No, let's see...we had TV probably when I was 13 or 14...something like that.

FS: I can't remember when we got our first TV.

SS: Because I remember momma, she'd stand and iron and she'd watch the World Series. I thought that was fascinating. Then of course bath time...that had to be even after, I mean before TV. Bath times, you'd go to the spring and bring up your bath water and one kid would jump in and take a bath and then the next kid and then the next kid. *-laughs-* Rather than going to the spring and bring more hot water back up. That's what we did.

FS: But I can remember going to my daddy's sisters house and they had a TV. An old RC8 Vector I think was the name of it. And she passed away about 10 years ago. And I think someone got the TV, she still had the TV of course but it wasn't working. But we'd go to her house on a Saturday night and watch Jack and Benny or whoever was on, I can remember that as a child. But we didn't have a TV. I do not remember the first time we had a TV.

SS: I remember watching little cartoons and stuff, as far as the age I'm not sure.

ER: Did you use the spring for baths throughout the winter? Did you just have to tote the water back out and warm it or did you just jump right in and do it as quick as possible? *-laughs-*

SS: Oh yes. Oh yes. You carried the water from the spring which was quite a bit of distance and you do it for your laundry, for your bath, for your drinking, the whole deal.

ER: What kind of local historical events do you feel has impacted your life most importantly, most significantly. Some people say, you know the segregation, desegregation of schools, some people would say the closing of the mills...

FS: When I was in Vietnam, two weeks prior to me leaving, April 4th 68, Martin Luther King got killed and I'll never forget that day. When it hit that day...when the news feed hit us, of course the news wasn't that quick at moving then, I think [*unintelligible*] be at Vietnam a couple of times and some of the others more safer, several of them. We had...I never realized the difference between black and white in the military then, I just didn't. When we were in boot

camp at Parris Island we were all one, you know whether you were white, black, or whatever nationality you were. But April 4th of 68 kind of spotlighted that for me when Martin Luther King got killed and we had a staff sergeant there that was, kind of a butthole I guess you would say, and he literally, from that day to the day that I left I never saw him again because he went in his little tent or whatever he was in and they wouldn't let him come out because he was afraid someone would shoot him. That was when I really about the difference between blacks and whites at that time. And the reason I'm saying that, when we were share croppers from farm to farm, the blacks were just as poor as us or we were poorer than them depending on where we were living. We were the same, you know it didn't matter. But I think that one day...that one time was a big deal to me because I had never noticed it really before. We worked with blacks in Parris Island we were all the same. You know that one event is probably the biggest.

SS: Well even growing up doing the sharecropping, I myself...the black share croppers were moving into the house we just moved out of.

FS: Yeah.

SS: And then they would move out and we would come and live in the same house. I mean they weren't any different to us. It was just life.

FS: We never noticed that because we grew up with it. But after that we saw...I saw in the military the difference. Even when I was in Vietnam, I made a comment to...one African American asked me one time about blacks and whites in Vietnam and I said "Well they had their little groups and we had ours." But it wasn't a racial thing, it was just the way it happened I said "Well when this guy's in the foxhole with me and he got hurt he had the same kind of blood I did, it was all red so we were the same".

ER: The guy that you talked about earlier that you said had to be removed because they were afraid someone was going to...he was African American correct?

FS: Yes. Yes he was.

ER: Okay, I just wanted to make sure.

FS: He was black staff sergeant. And he was kind of pushy and...well he was pushy I mean I knew him but he wasn't in my company, but I never saw him after that, they took his food to him, they did everything because if he was to come out everybody had a loaded gun and we were in field so somebody would have probably killed him.

ER: Wow. And that would have been racially motivated in their part or just because...?

FS: No it's just...I think it may have inspired the racism then because a lot of people didn't like what Martin Luther King stood for and they still don't but they haven't read him or they don't understand.

SS: I don't think they understand as much.

FS: They don't understand what he stood for.

ER: Do you know anybody that might come to see him when he came to the area?

FS: No, I do not. I don't know. But I remember Danville was in a lot of turmoil back in the 60s up and down Main Street. I remember that as a teenager or whatever.

SS: What was it in the 70s when we were living down in Yanceyville?

FS: Yeah.

[Timestamp – 1:15:50] SS: When we had the riots or fire or whatever there.

FS: It was early 70s.

SS: Yeah.

ER: Could you explain a little bit about that?

FS: Well in reality, when I got out in September of 69 we moved into a little house there in Yanceyville. What a little four room...four room house we rented and I think it was...I really don't know what happened. I know we were under curfew and all this, they threw some fire bombs into a couple businesses downtown.

ER: Who is "they?"

FS: The...I guess it was blacks and whites. We were not a part of it, I wasn't going down there.

SS: We were trying to stay away from it.

FS: We were trying to stay away. I don't know that I had seen enough shooting and all that. I didn't want to go down there, but I know that the state troopers...it was like martial law, I guess it was considered martial law but we did have a curfew and the state troopers were in town

patrolling. They actually parked in front of our house one night and was watching the people down the street, all this rioting, but we never became a part of that. I didn't...we didn't do that.

ER: What sparked the riot?

FS: To tell you the truth, I don't know.

SS: I'd have to go back and...

FS: I don't know. But for several days...

SS: For several days they more or less told us to keep to ourselves.

FS: "You stay in." That was...I think it's got to be the early year of 70 or early 71 because we moved October of 1971 to Greensboro.

SS: And I think it was what 1965 or 1966 when the schools were integrated over there because I think my class...I think we had two or three African Americans and of course it was different. I mean of course they came and they kept to themselves too and I don't think they were comfortable with us and we weren't comfortable with them because we didn't know at that time.

ER: Do you think that there are still racial issues today?

SS: Oh yeah.

FS: Yeah. It depends but usually some of the people that...

SS: Are narrow minded.

FS: The narrow minded, uneducated...and I guess it can go vice versa the other way too. Some of those people a little more pushy and think that they deserve more than...deserve more recognition or whatever I don't know but then it's resentment from that.

ER: Do you see a way to go forward with these? Any ideas?

FS: Well I think basically one thing that probably hurts Caswell and Yanceyville is because of low income, people less educated than other places that just don't...they don't want to know the truth and they don't read up on it like mentioned Martin Luther King people don't realize that he was a nonviolent person and I believe that. The violence came from the people who didn't like

what he did, it didn't come from Martin Luther King and his [*unintelligible*] and all those, it did not come from them. It came from other uneducated dumb people I think.

ER: This is backtracking a little while but it peaked my interest. When you talked about the main frame computer...a little bit, could you describe what it was like working with one of those?

SS: I mean it was just set functions that you could do and that was all you could do, you couldn't...your Excel spreadsheet, your Word, all these things we have today it wasn't there, you still had to do it on the typewriter.

FS: Explain what the mainframe is.

SS: The mainframe is just a set functional...

FS: It's one set of computer.

SS: Yeah.

FS: And now you've got one set of computer stored all of this for maybe 10 people. A big, huge machine that would maybe take up that cabinet possibly. And then today it's all on this...in your hand now. It's basically in your hand.

SS: It was just more or less information in a central location that everybody got to use the same function and it's like I said today you've got your Excel , you've got your own laptop, you've got your own PC computer, well then everybody had to use this main frame versus using all of these personal stuff.

FS: Well everyone got telephones now that's a computer, back then it wasn't...like a typewriter.

SS: We virtually use a type writer now compared to what we used to have to use.

FS: I mean you ask kids now what a typewriter is and they don't know. Like when we was in the military...

SS: I've heard that before "What is that?"

FS: When I was in the military when they did...up until 1969 when they typed your orders out, it was all on a Remington typewriter. We called those guys Remington Raiders, you know we nicknamed those guys because of the Remington typewriter, but now nobody knows what a typewriter is.

ER: Now Remington...the same people who make the guns, they make typewriters? Or are they totally different? *-laughs-*

FS: Well I don't know if it was the same company but Remington typewriters in the military and we called the guys...the clerks, we called them Remington Raiders. That's what we nicknamed those guys.

SS: Another brand was what Royal?

FS: Another brand was Royal.

SS: The typewriter.

FS: The typewriter.

ER: Did they like that nickname? *-laughs-*

FS: I guess. Yeah, Remington Raiders.

ER: What years were the mainframe computer until you switched over to the PC's? I'm just looking at the time frame.

SS: We came back in what 1993?

FS: 93.

SS: We came back in 93.

FS: Then you worked at Guilford Mills until 95 and then you went to the county.

SS: I went to the county in 97, and that was when it was just the mainframe stuff. They didn't have PCs and Excel and stuff in Caswell County and of course when I got there and things started booming a little bit we got one PC and it was four of us in that office that had to use that one PC. If we wanted to do anything on Excel, Lotus, or Word we had to go to that one computer which of course was in the boss's office.

ER: You guys had to...

SS: Share.

ER: Yeah. You had to like reserve. "I reserve 2:00 to 3:00 at the computer." *-laughs-*

SS: Eventually as time went on everybody got educated or more educated. We'd go to the PCC and take courses and then we started to get our own little PCs which was very nice.

FS: But down in the new court house...the newer court house whoever did the computer work down there would have to go in that night and back it up on the main frame.

SS: It would have to be backed up every night.

FS: Backed up at night. Now you know how to save and you got it.

ER: Right. Wow.

SS: It changed within a few years after I got there. It's just like I said, they were behind time and had to graduate. *-laughs-*

ER: Was there anything that you want to talk about or any memories that you want to share that I haven't asked? I just kind of have generic questions or ones that just kind of pop in my mind as we are talking. Of course if there's something we chatted about and you want to I'd be more than willing to listen.

[Timestamp - 1:23:40] FS: Well I was thinking my boyhood when I was growing up in Providence and I was born in Southwestern Virginia and my family moved up here with my father and my granddad to go farming probably around 50 or 51 I think but granddaddy moved up here around 50 I think. My dad and most of the rest of the family moved here in 51 or 52 but they followed granddaddy like her daddy followed his dad to go farming. That's all they knew. But you look back now and when I talk to my son sometimes now we tell them that "You know even when I was 16 or 17 years old when I pulled tobacco all day I pulled 50 cents an hour, \$5 a day, waited for this old gentleman to pick us up at 5:30 in the morning to 6:00. He would give us a drink and a pack of Nabs at 10:00 or an oatmeal cookie, feed us lunch at 2:30 or whatever and give us another drink and a pack of Nabs or an oatmeal cookie or MoonPie or whatever and then when our 10 hours was up he'd take us home and give us \$5 a piece."

SS: And you thought you were rich. *-laughs-*

FS: We had money.

SS: We did. That was our money to do something with.

FS: That was our spending money. And I used to mow yards on Saturday afternoon because dad would work us five and a half days a week unless he farmed...we called it farming out and he farm you out to another farm and that's \$5 day. And some of the thing they did was really barter. They helped another farmer and then that farmer helped them [*unintelligible*]. That was the barter system we used then, that doesn't happen today. You look back on that and you know if you had \$5 in your pocket instead of \$500 you were rich.

SS: We thought we were in on it when we got that \$5.

FS: Of course a drink was six cent a piece when you go to the store and Pepsi-Cola is six cents.

SS: Stamps was what about three or two cents?

FS: Something like that, two or three cents. But we were rich and didn't know it.

ER: So did you save most of the money that you would get or would you just go ahead and spend it? *-laughs-*

FS: I would always spend it.

SS: The times that we would go and help someone like Mr. White, he would give us \$5. Well that money we would keep and buy school clothes and shoes for the next school year. So that's what we did with our money.

FS: And you may not get but two pairs of shoes a year. You wouldn't have like 20 pairs in the closet like you do now. I got about 10 pair and I only wear two or three and I still got 10 pairs of shoes.

SS: And of course for the girls was the white and black saddle oxfords, always.

ER: Did you guys ever make your own clothes? Sow them or anything?

FS: Momma made some for my 2 sisters and they...

SS: They make them from flour sacks.

FS: They make them from the flour sacks and the material that we got the...we called it shift feed to mix up with water and feed it to the pigs.

SS: Or have flour come in it. It would come in...what would you say?

FS: Probably a 100 pound bag.

SS: Yeah even when you got this big old flour barrel, momma would dump the flour in there and put the lid on it and then wash the material and make you clothes out of it. You had to make do with what you had.

FS: I don't know when my two sisters, which are both deceased now, actually got a store bought dress because momma made them and these print bags would come in different prints or whatever.

SS: Because they knew what people were going to do with them, they were going to make clothes out of them.

ER: So they knew?

SS: Yeah they knew.

ER: And you said they were called "shift?"

FS: I think that's right, "shift feed."

ER: Is that right because I've heard of shift dresses is that not the same thing?

SS: No.

ER: Is that not the same thing?

SS: No.

FS: I think that's what they used to call it.

SS: It's shift feed for the animals and then it was flour bags...flour sacks...

FS: Ground up flour. Over at where the new Y [*Note: He means the YMCA in Danville*] is going up now, there used to be feed mill there and you'd take your corn or wheat over there and they'd grind it for you and they'd put them in these pig bags and you'd take them home. Over by the left side of the bridge a big Y is going up over there that's where it was.

ER: Right by the river?

FS: Right by the river.

SS: Back then you bought in bulk, your pinto beans, your navy beans, stuff like that as far as dried foods and whatever of course we did the canning and stuff. You had to buy you dried goods.

FS: And potatoes you would store those up under the house or somewhere where it was cool for the whole winter just about.

SS: Whether it was sweet potatoes or Irish potatoes. We did even out them in the pack barn then.

FS: As long as it was cool.

SS: In the cellar part or where it was wet to keep them cool. They'd last a long time.

ER: Talking about the river a little bit reminded me what relationship do you think the residents have with the river then versus now?

FS: Well biggest change ever happened before Dan River Mills came here. Dan River Mills really wanted to locate in Milton and Caswell County didn't want them and this is going back a long time ago. Well Milton and that side of the river could have been like this side if they were to accept Dan River at the time and they said "No." Years of history will tell you that.

SS: Because the railroad went through there.

FS: We had a railroad.

SS: Well the railroad...yeah I guess it went through Blanch as well.

FS: Through Blanch and Milton.

SS: Blanch used to be a pretty good little area at one time because the train always stopped there.

FS: In reality, Yanceyville may not have been much because there's not a train that comes in Yanceyville but it stayed in Milton.

SS: Yanceyville and Milton...I mean Blanch and Milton could have grew.

FS: Could have prospered but they didn't want that.

SS: If only that they didn't...

FS: They didn't want Dan River Mills.

SS: And Milton hasn't changed hardly any either.

FS: So it's a lot of things, hindsight is 20-20.

SS: Lots. It could have grew but back in what the early 1800s...early 1900s really, Caswell County was very economical because of the tobacco but now tobacco's not there and of course because of cancer threats and health issues. Tobacco, I don't know how long it will be in Caswell County or even in Virginia.

FS: Some are even predicting in another five to 10 years some of the farmers because the buyout I think ends this year and the payoff for the tobacco farmers in Carolina, don't know about Virginia, but after this year the payoff ends they paid them...it starts dwindling acres.

SS: Tobacco is what actually made Caswell County but now that it's going I don't know what to do how the economy will turn out.

FS: Well like I said 75 percent of the people go outside of the county anyway now. It may go up a little but then.

ER: What was your experience with the coal spill? Did you have any impact on your life from that?

FS: No.

ER: No?

FS: I think it's overdone. I think with this many million gallons of water coming down the river and with the [*unintelligible*] or whatever, I think it's EPA and a lot of "tree huggers" as I call them that really blundered out of proportion I think. That's my opinion.

SS: But of course our water as far as Yanceyville, it doesn't come out of the Dan River but I know a lot of people fish and whatever and do recreational sports but as far as drinking water we gave our own reservoir. What was it somebody we came across to eat...somebody came across to eat in Danville, just don't get the water or you'll be drinking coal ash. I said, "I hope not!"

FS: But the way they got purifying water now I don't think there would be any effect in that. I just don't. That's just like taking a drop of something and putting it in 50 gallons of water, I mean how much effect would it have? I just don't see where...

SS: And we've had a lot of rain and stuff since then.

FS: All of the rivers and creeks came up since then so it was deluded a bunch I think.

ER: I didn't have any questions like I said left really that popped in my mind but again if there's anything else you want to talk about you can or if you guys what to call it a day that's fine too.

FS: No I appreciate the opportunity of being here today.

ER: No, thank you for coming.

SS: It's always a pleasure to look back.

FS: We tell our two sons and of course well tell our granddaughter one of these days what we did when we were small and she'll laugh. Basically my youngest son laughs now some like "Y'all had to do that?" It's just a different world.

[Timestamp - 1:33:33] SS: It's just like at the museum, I was in there just recently and this mother came in with her two young children, I reckon they were boys probably 12 or 13 and then the other child was maybe eight and she was showing them the old phones, the old heavy phones. I said "It's a whole lot different from today isn't it? Here you are, you can hold this one in your hand," I said "Pick this one up," and he said "Geez it's heavy," and his mother went on to tell him "Yeah years ago when they had these phones you had party lines so you would have to ask your neighbor if you could talk to another neighbor or somebody else on the road," I said "Otherwise you just have...you can get four or five people on that party line."

FS: It was a gossip line.

SS: Yeah. That little fellow, he just looks and goes "What?" And then too when we had the Heritage Festival just recently I had a quilt and I was going to show some of the quilt and stuff and this mother came over with three of her children and before she walked away I said "By the way, over behind the court house, we've got a one room school back there," and I said "They're playing the old games," and a little boy I heard "Mom, are they playing video games?" and I said "No, not that kind of game. Hopscotch and marbles and that kind of stuff, games that we used to

play.” But I thought that it was intriguing that...like the phone, he thought it was a video game so it’s odd to see the kids now they just look back and say “Ya’ll had that?”

ER: Technology has been changing very rapidly.

SS: I wonder what it’s going to be like in the next 20 years.

ER: Did you know that there’s the super computer right down the street, Noblis? It’s one of the nations few super computers. It houses like a lot of the information for big companies and things like that. Yeah right down the street in one of the older houses, one of the big warehouses.

SS: I like what they’ve done to the streets here.

ER: Yeah, it’s really pretty

SS: It’s amazing.

FS: I was afraid that this would get left out, this whole area.

ER: Yeah it could be a bad area but half of it could have gotten really...

SS: It’s wonderful what they’ve done.

ER: Yeah they’re planning...there’s little lofts that just opened down the road and there’s the senior home also on this road. There’s going to be more apartments a ways back and maybe possibly some kind of...the Bistro just opened so maybe more restaurants or nightclubs even. I don’t know, I’m hearing a lot of things. *-laughs-*

SS: It’s grown and it’s possible. And then the river walk itself, the river walk is gorgeous. We used to come over quite often, recently we haven’t been able to but it’s a gorgeous walk. Very nice.

ER: Yeah, hopefully the downtown area, the revitalization and stuff starts to pick up.

SS: When we used to come to Danville for the market or whatever, Belk’s would be one of the stopping places, Woolworth’s, Talheimer’s, which is long gone **[Illegible 1:36:53-1:36:57]**.

FS: *[Unintelligible]* store.

SS: Yeah *[Unintelligible]*. It was nice.

FS: Woolworth. F. W. Woolworth store.

SS: It was nice to walk in the little shops or whatever. When they vanish, it's almost like the town vanishes.

FS: But you come over here on Saturday then it bustling on Main Street.

SS: Oh yeah. I mean it was just...

FS: There would be people on both sides of the streets back in the 60s.

ER: When did the trolley...I know there used to be a trolley on Main Street, when did that get taken out?

FS: I don't remember the trolley.

SS: I don't either.

ER: I mean it would go up the Schoolfield I think.

SS: I mean I've heard of it but as far as actually seeing it I haven't.

FS: It might have been a little prior to me. I don't remember the trolley.

ER: Yeah I was trying to think of the years, the timeframe of it and I just didn't know.

FS: The old bus station used to be across from the old post office. Where the audiological [?] place is now, they used to bus station where we would ride the old Red Fox or Silver Fox.

SS: Silver Fox! That's what it was! It was called the Silver Fox!

FS: It's the Silver Fox, not the Red Fox.

ER: Was it silver? Was it painted silver is that why.

FS: Yeah. Red McDuffy was the guy who drove it.

ER: Oh Red, that's his name.

SS: That's where he was getting "Red" from.

FS: That's where I was getting "Red Fox" from but "Silver Fox"

SS: His children still live in Caswell County...in Yanceyville really.

FS: But that's where they would pull up and unload and that's where you would have to come back to if you were just coming to go downtown. Now if you worked in the Schoolfield or downtown you'd have a little schedule and he'd drop you off and pick you back up on the Silver Fox.

SS: Now Danville has always been a part of our life. Always.

ER: Well I thank y'all for coming by.

FS: Well thank you.

SS: Thank you for having us. I hope we didn't break your camera. *-laughs-*

ER: No, I think it's still going, it's blinking. It's like "I'm about to run out of battery."

FS: It's still blinking.

ER: Yup, that's what it's doing, it's telling me...

SS: It's about time.

ER: It's about time. Okay, well thank y'all.

SS: Very good, thank you.

ER: And I'll walk you out.

[END TRANSCRIPTION]