

Interview with Mr. Bill Alexander
And his wife Mrs. Dot Alexander
Stories on the Land
July 19, 1999
Interview by: Kathryn Sanders

KS: Bill, where were you born?

BA: I was borned in Greene County on the Buckingham Road in 19 and 29. And then in 19 and 36 we moved up in the Shiloh Community on the corner of Holly Creek and Shiloh Road where... um... our family lived. That's where I was.....

DA: Your home place?

BA: My home place yes.

KS: And that's where you are living now?

BA: Yes.

KS: Ok. So you generally spent all your life right here in this community?

BA: Yes.

KS: Ok. Did you go off at any point? Move off?

BA: Yes, I... um... was in the Army for a couple of years and then I played three years professional baseball in the New York Giant Organization.

KS: So that was quite different from being here?

BA: Oh yes it was.

KS: (Laughs) Quite a culture shock I am sure going away. Let's see...Dot when and where you born?

DA: I was born in Greene County. I was born in the county, but reared in the city mostly. I married Bill Alexander in 19 and 56 and we did live... uh... we built a house in College View which was in the county at the time, but we were taken into the city. And then, when his mother passed away... um... we renovated the home place in '79 where we now live on Shiloh and Holly Creek Road.

KS: Umm-hmm it is quite lovely. You did an excellent job.

DA: Thank you.

KS: Ok Bill... umm... I know you said that you played baseball for awhile. What did you do other than that for your living?

BA: Well, while I was going to college, I worked for my uncle as a surveyor and then after graduating from college, Tusculum College, I went to work with Magnavox Corporation as Personnel Manager and then some year or two later, I was transferred to Jefferson City as Director of Personnel in the Jefferson City plant.

KS: Ok is that in Tennessee? I'm not real familiar with....

BA: Yes, that's in Tennessee. I worked there for a year and then got a job, at what at that time was the First National Bank, and worked for them for approximately 35 years.

KS: So you did manage, I mean that was a very long time. Did you... how far is Jefferson City away?

BA: About 45 miles.

KS: Ok, so you were actually close enough to still maintain contact?

BA: Oh yes, we would come home on the weekends.

KS: Dot, how was... what have you been doing other than - I know housework (laughs) taking care of a home is a lot of

DA: Uh... I have been... um... I have my self retirement from a business. I had a ladies dress shop for approximately 15 years. Before that I was... uh... kept books for some places and worked at Laughlin Hospital. I was the third receptionist at the Laughlin Hospital back many years ago. So, I now am retired and just a house wife.

KS: Um-hmm. Where was your dress shop?

DA: The last location was on Tusculum Boulevard... uh... where Dr. Dale Brown is now. We sold him that building.

KS: What years did you have it approximately.

DA: We started the shop in 19 and 70 and opened just a little shop out near the bank where Bill was running and then I moved to Town Square and then we bought our own location on Tusculum Boulevard and we were out there about 7 years. So... uh... it's just the two of us and it was really a little bit working me to death I guess and plus the fact we renovated the home place and I was interested in this and so I just wanted to not work.

KS: When did you do the... start the renovation? Now, I'd seen some pictures before ...

DA: Well, actually we started the planning of it in February of '79 and we moved here November the 13th of '79. So we really... we had wonderful builders and helpers and they worked on it continuously.

KS: Had someone been living here until.....?

BA: My grandmother.

KS: Ok your grandmother lived here until.....

DA: No your mother lived here (laughs) until the last.

BA: Well my mother lived here, then before that my grandmother lived here.

KS: Did they build the house? Do you know?

BA: I don't know. We can't trace it back that far.

DA: Keep planning to do that and.....

BA: Cause my mother lived to be 83 years old and my grandmother was about 84 I believe when she died. So I think that probably her mother and father did build the house.

DA: I might add that... uh... this was sort of a little settlement here. There was White's Mill down at the road, across the creek, a big mill where all the farmers brought their grain. And I know when Bill and I first married in 1956... umm... uhh... we would come down just about every Sunday before dinner and when I went home I always had even to a broom that was made from the place in town there where she would furnish the grain I guess, or whatever it was. You can tell I was pretty much reared in the city. But, they had their own... umm... pork. They had their own hogs, their own cows, their milk, the garden and very little to buy actually.

KS: You are talking about Bill's grandparents?

DA: Bill's mother.

BA: I believe she mentioned this was a little community center and it was. My grandfather ran the mill. My grandmother ran a general store and then they had a blacksmith shop to boot... in addition to that. And then they had what they call a weigh scale, where you could drive a wagon into what appeared to be a covered bridge, but it was a weigh scale and they would weigh the wagon with the corn or wheat on it. Then once it was emptied they'd come back and weight it again and that's how much that you either took to the mill or if you didn't have your work done at the mill and took it to town they charged you a small fee. I think it was five cents... a nickel.

DA: Speaking of the store...the country store. It was right here in this front yard....

KS: I was going to ask.....

DA: down at the road and the house back here, the little red house, is that store. We moved it up here and sort of fixed it up for the children to have to play in.

KS: Where were these other...the other places that you mentioned...the other buildings? Where were they in relationship?

BA: Down at the road.

KS: Just right here at this street?

BA: Um-hum near the creek.

KS: On this side?

BA: The store was on this side... yeah... and the blacksmith shop... yes.

KS: On this side but in front of the house? Between here and the street?

BA: Um-hmm, yes.

DA: And the big mill, which you can see stone up there yet, if it was cleaned out. We do not own that part of it.

KS: Up on the left?

DA: Right.

KS: Ok.

DA: We do not own that property. But you can still see where a dam was...

KS: Um-hmm on the stream across...

DA: which is filled up, yes.

KS: It's a little way up though isn't it?

BA: Yes, but it's about 100 feet across or better.

KS: I was trying to, you know, do some description, because you know we are on tape. Did you have pictures of any of this?

DA: Yes, I have a picture of the mill up in the store house – a large picture of the mill. I do have some other pictures some where in all this.

BA: It was uh... about four stories high.

KS: Wow.

BA: It wasn't a small mill. It was a big flourmill they used to call it – or a gristmill, you know. They did both flour for baking biscuits as well as ground up grain for the cattle.

KS: Did you spend much time up there?

BA: Quite a bit.

KS: Is there, you know, any particular stories you might want to mention?

BA: Well, it was a wonderful place to go swimming.

KS: Was it?

BA: That was back before all the streams were polluted and yes, it was a wonderful recreation area.

KS: Because of the dam, I guess made quite a swimming hole?

BA: Yes, it did.

KS: What about fishing?

BA: Well, yeah, small fish, just creek fish. So.

KS: So you lived in town and you kinda missed out on some of this?

DA: Yes, uh-huh. I thought he lived as far away as Knoxville. Living from McKee Street out here, back in those days seemed far away and it was, because you know you had one family car among everybody. Matter of fact, I always teased him and told him that he married me for my car.

KS: Well, you lived down town?

DA: I lived within two blocks of the high school. Not the one that is there now, but the one that is now Nathanael Greene Museum. That's where I went to high school and I lived within two blocks of the school on McKee Street.

KS: Well, then you didn't have any mills down town or swimming holes so what did y'all do for recreation?

DA: Well we had Forest Park Pool.

KS: Oh... Where was that?

DA: This was very popular then.

KS: Was that near the hospital?

DA: Near Takoma Hospital, just sort of between the high school and Takoma Hospital.

KS: Closer to the hospital, is it where is it now?

DA: Yes, um-hmm. That was the place in town to go because we didn't have anything.

KS: What is there now? Give us an idea of where it is today.

DA: It is still Forest Park, but they, to my knowledge, they just don't have the pool there. But you can still go down there and take a little picnic and I think lots of organizations use it.

KS: Oh ok. Do you remember what street is it on? I am trying to place it.

DA: It is on... is it on Forest Street?

KS: Ok, because I know there is a little park over there.

DA: Yes. Forest Street.

KS: And there was a pool there too?

DA: Yes, um-hmm. You know if you go into like you are going to Andrew Johnson Monument place. The last street turn right on and keep going and it's down on the left.

KS: Ok. I guess we are getting sort of out, but I think that we are just talking which is good. Um. Let's see. Now do you farm this area too.

BA: No.

KS: How many acres are in here?

BA: In the tract that we live on here now there is only about 13 ½ acres or 14, something like that.

KS: And when you start to mow it, it seems like.....

DA: We mowed (____?____)

KS: (Laughs)

BA: Yeah, it is quite a large yard.

KS: Yeah, I'm sure it seems like a lot.

DA; But, you might add that this is just a small portion of the farm. Now, his brother lives across over there and he owns that land and the land beyond us and the land toward Shiloh Estates.

KS: It's all part of... you're saying what is the farm, the original farm?

DA: Well that was Alexander's across the road and this was the White's. Bill's mom was a White and his Dad an Alexander. That was the Alexander home place and this is actually the White's home place.

BA: I mentioned earlier that I was born on the Buckingham Road. Now we owned better than a 100 acre farm down there in which we just recently sold. I say recently, but it was in the last 10 years we sold it because it wasn't economically feasible for us to keep it. In fact it was costing us money just to own it.

KS: Were you using the land for anything?

BA: Farm it.

KS: So you were farming on it?

BA: Yes. We had tenant farmers.

KS: Oh, tenant farmers. Ok.

BA: And there's tenant farmers that still farms this land here that we are living on now.

KS: How does that work? Do they...uh...I guess they live there and farm then they pay like rent. I am not real familiar with how that works.

BA: Well, yes, that's basically true, what you said.

KS: So they grow what they want to?

BA: Pretty much what they want to, yeah.

KS: So you don't have any say so in what they grow?

BA: Not really, except the tobacco. We have some say so in the tobacco.

KS: Oh, tobacco.

DA: They actually use it more for dairy.

BA: Yeah for grazing cattle mostly.

DA: And that's what this is used for. Very little...I think they've put out a small tobacco crop, don't they?

BA: Yes, uh-huh.

DA: We've pretty much let them use this land here just to keep it up. You know, just to run the cattle on it and keep it bush-hogged and the fence rows cleaned out and taken care of.

KS: So you've got...so you sold that and so did you sell it to farmers or to dairy people or how was the hundred acres? How did that go?

BA: It was sold ... uh...it's hard to explain. It was not subdivided and that's one reason that we sold it without going through a public auction because we wanted it to stay farm land and it has stayed that way. There is...there's two houses on a hundred acres so to speak, but they're running cattle on it and raising some crops.

KS: So you talked before you sold it to the people, you felt reasonably sure that they were going to use it for farming or cattle, so you felt better about it.

BA: Most definitely yes.

DA: The person...the main person that bought it...umm...his property joined it and so the other house that was built on it was his sister. He sold off a portion of it to his family, but he was in control of the 100 acres, so he could pick and choose who he wanted to build there.

KS: Is that mainly what he does, then is just the farm, or does he work out?

BA: No, they work public works. It's just farming is pretty much a hobby with him.

KS: Now, this property over here. You said now that's tenant farming again. Is that the way you would describe it?

DA: The people that have cattle on it, they still have a public job. It is sort of a side thing. You know, it's pretty uh....

BA: You just can't make a living farming in this area now.

DA: Just that.

BA: Just that. If that's your only source of income it's difficult. Unless you have a grade A dairy, and they're hard pressed right now to survive.

KS: What makes it so difficult?

BA: For the dairy?

KS: For the dairy farmers in general.

BA: Well, the big...uh...dairy farmers are primarily in Florida and the Mid-West and they have these huge farms and they can undersell what it takes for the farmers here to raise their cattle, produce the milk, so it's very difficult. Now farming is quite a unique thing, in the fact that, if you have a store you put a price on an item and whoever comes in has to pay for it. Now the farmer when he takes his product to market he has to take whatever they give him. So that is....

KS: Makes it very difficult to plan or even to know what your income is coming in.

BA: Each year in the fall, when the farmer sells his tobacco, he takes it to town and he takes whatever they will give him for his tobacco. He has no say-so.

DA: Supply and demand.

BA: Well, it should be, but the large corporations are buying up some of these big farms and they could care less whether they make a profit off of the farm or not. It's a tax write-off as much as anything. So they will undersell and it makes it difficult to the ones that's trying to make a living on the farm.

DA: You know I think of it this way, just like before our vegetables come in, tomatoes here in Greene County, you have to pay \$1.95 a pound for tomatoes in the grocery store and yet the farmers...uh...I know I have a cousin that is a big time tomato grower and you can go out there and buy them for \$.50 a pound – good tomatoes. So I think that's the one thing. If we are paying \$1.95 for tomatoes in California or someplace like that, then Greene County ought to get a fair price not a fourth of what we're paying through the year.

KS: Well, I wonder why...I wonder if it's just not a market...in other words, not being able to get that to a market, or it's not marketed close enough. Because I mean that is a great deal of difference. I mean, you know, paying \$1.95 for tomatoes from numerous states away whereas we may have plenty right here and.....

DA: for \$.50 a pound.

KS: Right.

DA: \$.50 a pound that's what...uh...I don't know. I don't know what the....of course I do know that the cost of getting the tomatoes here and the difference in the...probably the amount that they have to pay to get it all done.

KS: But why not, if there's a lot of tomatoes here, why not sell these tomatoes here? Why don't people buy these tomatoes rather than, you know.....

DA: I should too.

BA: But they do, but see we only have a short span of time during the year that we can grow tomatoes here and a tomato will not save, you know, when it ripens. You've got to get it to market and sell it or it will rot on you right away...pretty soon. So, that's the reason. Now these tomatoes that are shipped in here commercially, they're picked green and they are preserved with some kind of gas and then over a period of time they ripen in the warehouse. But the only way they can ship a tomato is for them to be green, otherwise they are just, they can't ripen the tomatoes on the vine and ship them.

DA: now I don't know how they are handling these hydroponic tomatoes, grown in the water, and they're wonderful. They taste like our Greene County grown tomatoes. Uh...but I think well maybe that would catch on here to where we can have our own home grown tomatoes.

KS: You mean somebody actually found that commercially they could grow them hydroponically economically and then sell them right there. So that does make a lot of sense.

DA: Right.

BA: It might be something to be developed.

KS: It's a good idea. I was wondering though. If it's the growing season you think is why that they don't market as well here. Because what I was thinking is, if they are coming in from California so the stores just have...uh...they end up just using the same supply rather than using a source locally when they came to the grocery stores.

BA: When the tomatoes come in this time of the year, then the grocery stores will stop buying the tomatoes pretty much. So they will limit their purchase of these commercial tomatoes, because the taste is very much different. The ones that are grown locally here are, I would say two to one, a better tasting tomato that those that are shipped in here commercially.

KS: So they are anticipating that people are going to buy locally. So they don't bring in....

DA: Right.

BA: That's right.

KS: Umm... so you mentioned the farm over here. The acreage that somebody has the dairy on, and you mentioned the acreage back here behind you that was sold.

BA: Um-hmm. My twin brother sold it.

KS: And that was a surprise, what they intended to do with it.

BA: Yes.

KS: It was a surprise such that you had, you were led to believe otherwise.

BA: Yes.

KS: If you would like to share that with us.

BA: Ok I guess I would. Umm... The representative approached us, who had just come to visit with us a while they had an auction on the land which is approximately 14 acres or 15; and wanted to assure us they were going to build about 3 nice beautiful homes with some acreage to them. And we told them yes we were pleased to hear that. But when we found out differently, which almost was the next day I think....

KS: How did you find out?

BA: Uh....one of the surveyors up in the field. I said something about they're going to put 3 or 4. He said well they're going to put about 30 homes on this...

KS: I imagine that was a shock.

BA: Yes it was. So we went into Vaughn and Melton to inquire about it and sure enough on the drawing board, there it was. Then we tried to intervene to see if we could buy the land just to keep that from happening, but they did exercise their option and of course they built all these houses on it.

KS: What size are the lots up there? It must be fairly....if they got 30 out of....maybe that's only about a third... well...it would be less than a half an acre.

DA: I would say they range from 75 across and maybe 100 back up to 100 across and 150 back. It all depends on whether or not it was a corner lot.

KS: Well, does it impact you... I imagine it does...just kind of knowing that it's been done like that, but is there any other impact?

BA: Well, just some of the animals that they let run free – dogs and cats in the community. Which I am an animal lover so I don't really object to it, but it's changed. And we have ducks on the creek down here in front of the house and sometimes the dogs will kill the ducks. Now that's when I get angry.

DA: It actually doesn't bother us being up there. I just think that this community should have its older houses and all and it would have been nice to have been kept that way. Directly across the street from it is the Shiloh cemetery which is an old, old cemetery and all that land down to Cumberland Drive is in the cemetery and it would have been nice if they could have just kept it a.....

BA: a peaceful rural area.

KS: Let's talk about gardening. Do y'all keep a garden? Do you maintain a garden?

DA: A funny story about that... When we moved in here in '79 I always wanted to have a garden. So Bill's brother over there, he came over and plowed me up a large area. So for two years in a row I had the prettiest garden around. As a matter of fact, I sort of showed his garden up. They always had a nice garden. But I really had a beautiful garden. And Bill told me when I first mentioned I wanted a garden. He said I think that's wonderful, but I want you to understand up front that my momma made me hoe, but you can't make me hoe. So I don't want any part of the garden. So I said ok I'll just do it myself. So I was kidded quite a bit because people would pass by and he'd be laying up there in the hammock and I'd be out there hoeing. (laughs) So that lasted two years.

KS: (Laughs)

BA: I think really the Japanese beetles, that's back when we had...

DA: Ran me out.

BA: almost a plague of the Japanese beetles. I think they ran her out more so than perhaps me not helping her.

DA: I loved it actually. I loved having a garden. I would still like to have a garden, but uh....

BA: It's just the two of us, it's not feasible.

DA: Love homegrown. Greene County homegrown green beans and corn and all that.

KS: Let's see, y'all have been here quite a while in Greene County, do you know how your family first came or what generation came or anything historical?

BA: The rumor has it that one of my forefathers received a land grant from this area where we are sitting now, and it ran from Tusculum out the Erwin highway across the

river and then on the other side of the river went down to what is known as the area called Rainbow Bridge and then back up into the Glendale community and back from there into Tusculum College.

KS: That's quite extensive.

BA: Yes. And it's a matter of record, that the family sold some of the land off for \$0.25 an acre. I know that seems.....(laughs)

KS: (laughs) I know it does, but I mean at the time, you know, that was probably what, you know they.....

BA: Well, I heard my father say one time that his father and grandfather, they were land poor. They said when they paid the taxes that all the money they had to pay the taxes was the sale of tobacco. That he had \$1.29 left over after he paid the taxes on the land. So that's what he meant by being land poor.

KS: Yeah, it really is amazing what it does cost. It is nice to have, but it does cost. Do you know how far back that was, the land grant, do you have any idea?

BA: No I don't. It would have been I am sure some time after the revolutionary war, but...

KS: Yeah, and if they had only kept it up to now, huh? (laughs)

BA: Yeah, well, and then...uh...my family was one of the few families in Greene County that was slave holders.

KS: Oh that's interesting.

BA: And my great-great grandfather, I am not sure how many back, was killed in the woods right here below us down toward Glendale. He was riding through the woods in a hack and he was shot in the back, uh, what they thought at that time was a Union soldier. So most of the Alexanders from that time on were Democrats because you see we were slave holders and the Union of course, the war between the states, was over slavery as you know, and so the rumor has it that after he was killed and then later on after the Emancipation Proclamation – why – my grandfather, how many times back I am not sure, went to them and told them you're free and they said we've got no place to go, but he says I can't pay you. And they asked him if he would feed them. So they stayed on for a number of years and just dwindled down and I understand that he did give them, well there wasn't much money back then, but helped them out with their food and whatever their needs were at that time.

KS: I wonder if they continued to work the crops and stuff.

BA: Yes.

KS: So that's what they did and then they got the food.

BA: But they didn't know where to go you see. I mean they didn't have anywhere to go. They didn't have any money, no housing, no nothing, so he just let them live there for survival.

KS: That was very generous.

BA: Uh... yeah, really. Course there's two sides to that. He needed somebody to work the land. As I mentioned we had all these hundreds and hundreds of acres of land you see. Somebody had to work the land.

KS: Wonder what kind of crops they were growing. Have any idea?

BA: No I don't.

KS: I don't either. I don't know whether... when tobacco really came into the area.

BA: I don't either.

KS: Let me clarify two things. Now Glendale is that still the community that is around here.

BA: Yes.

KS: How far away is that?

BA: Mile and a half to two miles.

KS: Down Shiloh road?

BA: Down Shiloh road and it's....

KS: Going away from Tusculum.

BA: It's the extension of Church street.

KS: Church street leads into Buckingham Road?

BA: Yes. And from Glendale into the city limits is about a couple of miles – mile and a half to two miles.

KS: Ok. So that was a community that is still a community. The other thing was you mentioned your forefather was in a hack, what is a hack?

BA: That is a buggy, you know what a buggy is?

KS: Oh yeah, I am from the south, I just wanted to be sure.

BA: Ok, I guess it might be a colloquial nickname for a buggy.

KS: Yeah, I don't think I had heard it. So it possibly is colloquial.

BA: I think it's the Cadillac of the buggies. (laughs) I am not sure about that.

KS and DA: (Laughs)

KS: (Long pause) Let's see. You have already mentioned what schools...what schools did you attend in Greene County?

BA: Doak Elementary and Doak High School and Tusculum College.

KS: And you lived in town.

DA: Greeneville High School and the grade school at Sunnyside.

KS: Sunnyside?

DA: Um-hmm Sunnyside School.

KS: Is Sunnyside Still here?

DA: No. No longer exists.

KS: OK.

DA: And then I didn't graduate from college, but I went some at Tusculum College. We had a Greeneville Business College in town on Summer Street, up over, long about where Ideal Cleaners is. Mrs. Oral Anderson started this.

KS: How long did it...

DA: Well it was around for quite sometime.

BA: Oh a long time.

DA: A long time and I don't remember when it left, but I went there about 1949 and 50.

KS: What sort of classes did you have?

DA: Bookkeeping...um...

BA: Accounting

DA: Accounting... all business

KS: The college was business. That's interesting. That probably was... probably quite a few people went through there.

BA and DA: Oh yes.

KS: Wonder when it closed, about.

DA: You know I would... I am really just guessing, but I would think about around 60. Wouldn't you think?

BA: I was going to guess the mid fifties, but somewhere in there.

DA: Uh... fifties and sixty somewhere around there.

KS: Were there a lot of... this was downtown... was downtown really flourishing at that point?

DA: At that time yes. Downtown used to... like on Halloween night it would just be shoulder to shoulder down Depot St. and Main St. I have a lot of those pictures that you would like to see, I'm sure. But, we had nice stores downtown. Miller's department store was downtown, George R. Lanes. It was the place to go. People would go into town and sit in their cars and just park and visit you know in the streets.

KS: Oh really, hmm.

DA: Um-hmm, yeah.

KS: Was it basically because they really didn't... because it was still basically a rural area and so then the town was.....

BA: Yes

DA: Yes, uh-huh, on a rainy day the farmers might go in and they had nice pool rooms. There was two nice pool rooms in town wasn't there. One down there below where the hotel is now, that little corner building. I can remember when the corner building was a pool room and had good food and you could always smell it on the street and between that and the hotel was a Chevrolet place. And then of course Doughty's has always been there. It's been there for years and years. We had a JC Penney's down across from Deidra's in that building, the Leonard Building. That was JC Penney's. But you could go down Depot Street and down Main Street and in all the nice big stores.

KS: When did they start clearing out?

DA: When the by-pass...

KS: And that was about 10 years ago?

DA: About...uh...let's see my mother passed away in '67 and they were working on the by-pass then.

KS: Oh so it's been 30 years.

DA: Yeah the by-pass...um-hmm

KS: I didn't realize it was.....

DA: Now it hasn't been ...

KS: All those lanes...

DA: It was just from like Tusculum, just by-passing Greeneville. It wasn't all the way in to Johnson City. We still had the old route going into Johnson City from Tusculum, but the

BA: You had to go right through the college to get to Johnson City.

KS: Really?

DA: Um-hmm. But you would get on the by-pass along about this side of Laughlin Hospital.

KS: I wonder why they put the by-pass in. I mean why by-pass just Greeneville?

DA: Well, I think it was just to give a little relief of traffic downtown. Because the only way you could go from Tusculum Boulevard to Forest Park or Takoma Hospital would be right down through town.

BA: And if you were in Johnson City and wanted to go to Morristown you had to come right through Tusculum College downtown Greeneville.

DA: See that is 11E. Main Street is 11E.

BA: 11E...What is business 11E was the only route.

KS: Oh ok.

DA: So that's the reason for the by-pass.

KS: It really did change things a lot though.

DA: It did, I mean that was a big thing for Greeneville. Because I know this one person that took her husband to work and she couldn't figure out how to get headed back toward home so she just went right and downtown to come around to head back to Tusculum.

BA: I don't believe I'd have told that.

DA: So it was so out of the ordinary. (Laughs)

KS: Oh is this a first.....

DA: You know it was just something that we were not used to around here. And now all the clover leafs and everything, you can get around anywhere now. (laughs)

KS: (laughs) Umm...this is basically a church community too isn't it?

BA: Yes, this was known and still is as the Shiloh Community, but Tusculum...it's part of the Tusculum Community as well, but back...I mentioned to you when my grandfather had a community center here, the mill, the store, and the blacksmith shop...that was back before Tusculum came into its own. They didn't even have a grocery store up there. So you had to come down here if you lived anywhere around here to get groceries or go into town, into Greeneville.

KS: And going into town would be like...how long would it take you to get into town from her?

BA: Well, the only good road was go in to Tusculum and then in on what 11E is known now.

KS: Really round about.

BA: Yeah, because these other routes were very...none of the roads were paved and they were.....they call them potholes, we call them mud holes, because that's what they were. Some of them were so deep and so bad that the only sure way was to go from here near Shiloh church was up to Tusculum and then into Greeneville, that way.

DA: See this was just a little gravel road here in front of our house when we renovated here. And when we put in our driveways and all they were black topping Shiloh Road so we made a bargain with them that we would do the tiling and buy whatever it would take to get the water away from the road, because they were constantly down here working on this road, if they would bring the black topping on by. So we helped pay for part of that. We did the...I don't know what all. We bought the tile and the rock.....

KS: It probably was worth it for you.

BA: Oh yeah.

DA: Oh yes very definitely. And to take it past our upper driveway up here and then after that I think people up the road wanted it black topped all the way through, so that's...that come into being about probably 82-83, somewhere along there. And this road was traveled very little because you would have a hard time passing anybody on it. So, sometimes I'm sorry that they opened it up.

KS: I'm sure it was a mixed blessing.

DA: It helps, but it is.

KS: Well, how do you feel about the sense of community? Umm...it's probably changed radically from you know, when you were first here and really you too because you probably shared in that sense of community probably very early on. Umm...Just how the sense of community has changed.

BA: You see, what was the question? I'm sorry.

KS: Well, just the sense of community, how I'm sure that when you were first, you know, when you were like a child that it was more like a family community and then now what changes have come over here in the interceding years? What changes?

DA: But, you know it is still a family community with us... uhh... because the Miller house down the road here, it still has the connections of Alec Eden's mother and Dr. Sam Miller from Abingdon grew up in this house down here. The Botts have just fit right into the community and the Fosters up this way and the Dobsons and the Brittons and all and it's still considered a family community. So

KS: So it's very positive. So you really still like it. What is that saying ...

DA: We love it. It is still a family.

KS: It seems ...it's very nice and it's lovely and it's really quiet. I'm sure, you know, you said the traffic's picked up, but I mean it really seems a very lovely place.

DA: Oh yeah, and see like Mr. (??) out there on the front porch, he'll pass by and we're sitting on the porch and he comes out.

BA: He just comes out.

KS: So you sit on the front porch a lot.

DA: Yes, you know that's something that you don't see much of anymore – anybody using their front porch, but we use it practically every morning.

KS: That's true, front porches really make a difference in social life. I mean, like you said, you know, people dropping by. Course now a lot of houses don't have front porches.

DA: I know, but even back on this back porch. We have coffee. Walter, Bill's brother, comes over every morning, just about and has coffee. And I have seen three or four people out there having coffee early in the morning.

BA: When she gets up.

KS: Oh so it's a surprise. (laughs)

BA: Yeah (laughs)

DA: It's actually not because Joe Jaynes, the Jaynes farm up here, Joe still lives up that way and he stops in and has coffee.

BA: He still comes down on Sunday every once in a while.

KS: So it does sound very (___ ?? ___)

BA: and Leon Bell used to come by every, especially on Sunday morning.

DA: They live at the lake now, but you know, if he's out this way he will still come by. So it's still really a family community.

KS: Well, it sounds like it.

DA: And we really like being able to stay in the county. We're sitting right between Tusculum and Greeneville and we're here still in the county.

BA: Kinda in no man's land.

DA: We would like to keep it that way.

BA: Yeah.

KS: What would happen if you were... what do you mean you don't want to be annexed or something into one or the other?

DA: There would be no advantage to us to being annexed into Greeneville.

BA: Taxes would be much higher you see.

KS: You already have everything.

DA: We really don't want garbage pick-up. We would rather haul it to Sunnyside because to take it all the way down to the road, we'd rather load it up and take it on down to the

KS: Where is Sunnyside from here?

DA: It's about, would you say 3 ½ miles? Do you know where the Sunnyside loop is?

BA: You go down Shiloh Road, cross over Buckingham Road, that's called Mt. Hebron road. It's just an extension of Shiloh Road and you hit the Jones Bridge Road and as soon as you get to the Jones Bridge Road up to your right is the Sunnyside community and there is a school and of course the general store there that just recently closed.

KS: But that's not the Sunnyside where you went to school.

BA: Yes.

KS: Oh that is the Sunnyside where you went to school?

DA: Yes, um-hmm.

KS: And that was the grammar school for town?

DA: No it was the grammar school for – my Dad was in the building business and he has a sawmill and he built houses so I was in Sunnyside school when he first built some houses in town and so I continued going back out there. I bused out there to finish the eighth grade out there. So that is why I continued to go out there.

BA: When they would graduate from Sunnyside eighth grade then you had to either go to Greeneville or Camp Creek High School.

KS: Camp Creek is out.

DA: Way...about 12 miles out.

KS: Is it still there?

BA: Yes.

KS: Let's see I think we have discussed a lot about your feelings about the land, but do you have any more feelings about, you know, the place, the farms, the stream, I mean any other feelings about where you grew up. You out in the county and you in the city basically, but any other kind of feelings that you would like to talk about?

BA: I would like to add this – back when I was growing up, we went swimming in this creek all the time without any fear of bacteria, germs, whatever, but now the streams are so polluted now that you wouldn't dare go swimming in this creek. I mean, it's a shame, but it's the truth.

KS: I know it's sad, I mean, it's just really sad.

BA: It is sad.

DA: Very sad.

BA: And used to we were oh along the creek and we was thirsty, we'd just drink right out of the creek. You don't even wade in the creek now.

DA: Even the spring over on this side of the road from the creek, that was their supply of water when Bill was at home and his mom lived here.

KS: Did you go over and get the water? Or did you have ...

BA: Right down from where your car's parked.

KS: Oh right there?

DA: Just there in the yard, there was a spring house there. That's where you had to take your milk and butter and everything and put it in the spring house to keep it cool. Between that in the cellar out here, you know they didn't have refrigerators then. Ice boxes. But even now, that's still piped up here. We don't use it but... his mom... it was piped into the house.

KS: Where do you get your water?

DA: City.

KS: Oh so you are on city water?

DA: Yeah, we are on city water.

KS: What made you decide to change from the spring to the city water, just the quantity?

DA: Well

BA: They had the pump houses. Where Greeneville receives their water is out the Buckingham Road, well, and also when Greene Valley and Tusculum College, they needed water and sewer up there and so to somehow to make better pressure, they needed to put a large line up Shiloh Road which they did and we gave them the right of way or whatever, you know, and they in turn gave us a water tap for giving them the right to go

on the land. But of course we pay our water bill just like everybody else does. That was back I don't know how many years ago when Greene Valley was being developed and Tusculum College didn't have enough water pressure for in case of a fire. So somehow when they put this line from the Buckingham Road up to Tusculum College which connected everybody through here had city water.

DA: It was a good pressure too.

KS: Yeah, that makes a difference.

KS: How do you feel Greene County is changing?

BA: We are losing all of our farm land to building lots.

DA: Subdivisions and trailer parks.

BA: Subdivisions – factory subdivisions and with no zoning restrictions.

DA: That's the one thing I would love to see in Greene County.

BA: You can build a nice home and somebody right next door to you can put a mobile home. Which I know that is kind of a delicate subject because the youngsters now cannot afford, after they get married, cannot afford anything but those, so they say, and they've got to go somewhere.

DA: I think that's fine and good, but I think it should be zoned. I think there should be areas to where that's where the mobile home had to go instead of just out into a field. Like we could go right here between us and (?) and put mobile homes and we should not be able to do that. This should be zoned.

KS: So basically.....

BA: I understand that the County doesn't enforce their zoning laws anyway. If somebody wants to do something, they go right ahead and do it and then never do anything about it.

KS: I wonder who would actually be in charge of enforcing it.

BA: I don't know. I don't know if they know.

DA: Well, it seems like the county commissioners.

KS: Yeah, but I wonder how, whether they actually enforce.

BA: I don't think they have ever tried to.

KS: That certainly could create a problem right there or has.

BA: Oh yeah, and people knows it.

DA: It can be done.

KS: Yeah I think people are probably maybe they are very accepting...I know something that happened near our house. The man has lived right down below us and they've lived there for...I mean he's a couple of generations here and they have been in a house I believe 35-40 years and they had built up on a corner, had put in, there's a couple of things up in the corners. And he said you know, it's not zoned for that. And I was wondering, you know like, well why didn't you mention it or something like that, but I would think it would probably be if after so long that if nobody mentions it then it probably stays. There is probably something that, you know if nobody ever says anything. And they came in and put something else and I just don't think anybody wants to mention it. I think that's it. I mean you know it like...I don't know...do you think it's like not wanting to be rude or something? Do you think that's what it is? And people just sort of try to be very accepting.

DA: It is hard to fight anything like that. We found out how hard it is to get anything done when we tried to do something about this up here.

KS: About the land up here being sold.

DA: It was just impossible.

KS: That was a very difficult position you were in.

DA: It's just hard to get anything done and I think that most people think that they are wasting their time to try to get anything done.

KS: Oh the old proverbial you can't fight City Hall type thing?

DA: Sure, um-hmm.

KS: Could very well be it.

BA: When it comes to something like this in the county you don't where City Hall is.

KS: Very good point.

BA: Who do you complain to? Who do you go see? You get the old proverbial run around wherever you go.

DA: Well just like, and I guess it's our fault, we probably should call a couple of aldermen and have them out here and let on a day that it floods...

BA: Aldermen?

DA: I am talking about Greeneville Aldermen. When we get all of the water and trash and everything that washes down here in our yard from the subdivision up here. It washes across the road over into Walter's field, rock and all that. And that's why all the rocks piled up and it's an eyesore. It should not be. And I thought when you developed a subdivision, I thought you had to have some kind of a drainage system.

KS: You would think that there would be some sort of requirements or

DA: But they do not. You can go up Shiloh road and look at the end of our line up there and see a ditch that you could bury a good size dog in that comes all the way down through there and all the water comes down Shiloh Road into this basin down here. And whatever is in the way comes right down here in our yard and we have to pick it up (___? __). So that's the thing that..I guess things like that bother us more than anything.

KS: So it really kind of messes your area, I mean it's like you know, just not being respectful of where you live and you know keeping everything, you know you keep everything so nice, but then someone else is sort of like letting trash come in. It is very hard to take.

DA: But see it is probably our fault that we...well it is our fault that we don't try to do something about it.

BA: Well now we've complained to the county and the county says it's the city and the city says it's the county's problem.

DA: But it is the city. It's the city's property that it is coming off of. It's the subdivision up here.

BA: And we're in the county.

KS: Maybe you should just put a net right there you know and a drain right there.
(laughs)

DA: You see it washes across the road and the county has been out here and scooped up mud on Shiloh road just to keep accidents from happening. It's just something that really should...I think the City Fathers should do something about the drainage system in Shiloh Landing Community. It just boils down to that. They are the only ones that can say it's got to be done.

KS: I took a lot of your time. You want to just....we'll wrap this up...anything else that y'all would like to say?

BA: I don't think of anything do you Dot?

KS: This has been...y'all have really had a lot of good information. I really appreciate you being so candid.

BA: We've ad-libbed a lot. (laughs)

KS: Well I think it's very important because you know people really need to know some things about what's happening here and what has happened.

DA: You know this question #9 here "Did you have a favorite spot for recreation?"... umm... have you heard of Alexander beach. Well, it is over on the Nolichucky River and it used to be the place to go.

BA: It's at the end of the Buckingham Road.

DA: Um-hmm at the very end.

BA: There used to be a ferry there that would take your car across, course you as well, but you know you would pull your car up on the ferry and go across the river.

DA: And at one time wasn't the only way to get across the river.

BA: No there was... up on the Erwin Hwy they had Brown's Bridge. Now when the ferry, in fact a flood washed it out, and they never did replace it.

KS: When was that?

BA: Oh I don't know, a long time ago.

KS: Like in the 50's or the 60's.

BA: Even before the 50's. I'd say probably in the 40's.

KS: So there wasn't like the Asheville highway bridge?

BA: No there was no bridge, it was a ferry. You know what I am saying?

KS: I mean there wasn'tyeah I know what it is, but there wasn't a bridge over there either.

BA: There was a bridge on the Asheville Highway and one on the Erwin Highway and this one was you might say kind of in the middle, it would take you over to the south side of the river, but you had to go over on the ferry.

KS: When you went over is that where the beach was on the other side.

BA: No it's on this side.

KS: And you would go over to the other side and there was... what did you go for?

BA: Well, all the communities in around Zion church, the 107 Cutoff goes.....107 Cutoff follows the river down. So all of that area in and around Mt. Zion community over there.

KS: It's a lovely area.

BA: Yes it is. But it's... they I guess didn't.... Well at one time they considered building a bridge there but it fell through.

KS: So you go straight out Buckingham Road.

BA: Buckingham to the end of it.

KS: Would you see any of the... would you recognize it as a beach now?

BA: Oh no. All grown up and now there is a large land development that's bought the Alexander farm that is owned now by the Malone brothers and the Malone brothers has sold it to....

KS: Is this the one that is right out here... right down this street that goes....

BA: Yes.

DA: Holly Creek Road.

KS: Somebody was talking about that. So they did buy it. They said that it was rumored.

DA: They are developing it now and I understand... isn't it about 200 acres?

KS: It was large.

BA: It's big.

DA: and they want to develop it.

KS: Yeah and this was part of.....the Alexander farm... this was part of your...

BA: Yeah.

KS: There have certainly been a lot of changes.

BA: It was in the Appalachian League.

DA: But you mention the name Alexander and it's just baseball. I always said that I felt sorry for Bill's mom. She was a little lady and a lady, you know the white gloves and hat always at church with three boys and her husband was the manager of the baseball team here in Greeneville. So I had a lot to learn, because when I married Bill he was just being waited on. Because he had an old maid aunt that lived here in the house with them too. So when Bob and Bill were born they had to farm Walter out across the road over there. The Alexanders helped take care of him because she said that she would get them bathed and into bed and with the glass bottles and y'all had to be on some kind of special milk, goats milk or whatever, then she'd hear a click and would (tape ended mid sentence).