

PRESERVING OUR HISTORY: ROTARY CLUB OF GREENSBORO
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

INTERVIEWEE: Seth C. Macon

INTERVIEWER: Kathelene Smith

DATE: March 9, 2012

KS: My name is Kathelene Smith, and I'm at the home of Mr. Seth Macon for the Preserving Our History: Rotary Club of Greensboro Oral History. It's March 9th, 2012. Hello, Mr. Macon. How are you today?

SM: Fine. I'm glad to see you. Glad to have you.

KS: Thank you. Glad to be here. I want to ask you a few questions about your life. Why don't we start with when and where you were born? You've got a birthday coming up.

SM: I was born in a home, not a hospital, in Randolph County in the Providence Community which is the northern part of Randolph County and about five miles south of Climax.

KS: You grew up on a farm?

SM: Lived on a one hundred and forty acre farm that had a dirt road going through the farm, with a big fruit orchard on the other side of the road from the house. And I had a big house there, nine rooms, two stories, a big porch around three-fourths of it. And a big barn with a hayloft and stables on one side for the mules, and on the other side for the cattle. And I had a big granary and a big corncrib, and a car shed – truck shed – big enough for two or three trucks. And the garage for the automobile was not close to these buildings because they were afraid gasoline might cause a fire. So, they built the garage for the automobile out toward the road and away from the buildings. So, that was quite a place.

KS: So, tell me about your family and your home life. I know you had sisters and brothers.

SM: This is an interesting story, because my dad grew up in southern Randolph County in Holly Springs Community, and there's a Macon Road, and a big house there where he lived known as the Macon Home Place. But he got married several years before I was born and had one son, and his wife died. My father's wife died

when the son was six or seven years old, and he – my dad – waited two or three years and then married his former wife's sister. So, my oldest brother is my half-brother and my first cousin. I call him my three-fourths brother. And he was a great guy, had a lot to do with the way I grew up, and helped me tremendously.

KS: And his name was?

SM: Hershel. Hershel Macon. And to show you how – and then we had – I had in addition to Hershel, I had two older brothers. So, that's a total of three. And then, I had a younger brother and two younger sisters. So, I was in the middle with seven. And that tells you something about how I grew up because in the middle with seven – and of the seven children, five went to Guilford College. Hershel, my oldest brother and my three-fourths brother, graduated from Guilford College when I was five years old. And my first visit to the Guilford College campus was to his commencement.

KS: That's amazing.

SM: And it is amazing. And of the five who went to Guilford, four married Guilford graduates. And the two who didn't go to Guilford didn't have any children. They had happy marriages and lived together with their wives for fifty years but with no children. So all of my nieces and nephews were connected in some way or other with Guilford College.

KS: So, tell me what your mom and dad were like.

SM: Well, my mom was a younger one of a big family of Cravens. They grew up in southern Randolph County also. And my – what was the question?

KS: About your mom and your dad.

SM: My mom and my dad, well – they were both Quakers. And they – I grew up as a birthright Quaker in the Providence community. And the Quaker meeting there – the old meeting house and the cemetery have been there a long time. And the old meeting house was torn down soon after my oldest brother, Hershel, got married there. And my dad and a couple of the members of that church were pretty good carpenters, and they helped build a new church building, the Providence Meeting House. And the Providence Meeting House was built for their children – a schoolhouse on the same property. Built the original one, I think, in 1700 and the – it was torn down, and a new one built in 1800 something. And the new building, the second building, had a big meeting facility in half the building and one big school room in the other half. And I went to school there the first four years of my education – in a one-room school house with one teacher for seven grades.

KS: Goodness.

SM: And what an experience that was.

KS: Now, let me ask you, what is a “birthright Quaker?”

SM: Birthright Quaker is a Quaker that’s born with both parents who were Quakers. And they’ve been married more than a year when they were born. [Laughs]

KS: Now, I want to say for the record that you’ve written a wonderful book called, *Uphill Both Ways*, which I’ve read, and it describes some of your early childhood. And you mention that you had a bad case of diphtheria when you were young and that starting school was a little hard.

SM: Starting school was very difficult. My dad was chairman of the school board, and he started me to school when I was five years old, and I always wondered about that. But somebody explained to me that since I was six in March, I would be six before the end of the school year. So, I started to school when I was five years old. But the main thing, the main problem I had, was that my parents had two children younger than me when I started to school. So, I had a younger brother and a younger sister, and here I was going to school at age five and coming home with parents with two little kids. So, they never got around to helping me very much with my homework. And I never learned to read in school in the first four years because I was so interested in what was going on in that classroom. There was a great big blackboard on one side of the room, and the benches were in front of the blackboard. So, when one professor – who was a man more than sixty years old – when he called the class to come up for their class work, they would come and sit on those benches. There were no backrests. They were just flat benches facing the blackboard. And he stood there and talked to that particular class for their class period, and the rest of us were supposed to be in the study period. Well, I had to listen to what he was saying to all these other people because it was more interesting than trying to read a book. So, I spent my time listening to him, too much of it, I’m sure. But that was the way I grew up. Every desk in that classroom had two seats. So, I had to share my desk with another person. And as luck would have it, I shared my desk with the same guy for four years. His name – half the people called him Marvin Frazier, and the other half called him Marvin Dobson, because his mother was named Dobson. His father was well-known in the community but never moved in with his mother. And so, to make an interesting story, several years after we finished that four years he ended up in the penitentiary. So, I don’t know whether it was my bad influence or not. I don’t think it was.

KS: I doubt that. Now, I understand from your book that you had some harrowing walks through the woods to get to school.

SM: To get to school, well, there was one who was a person and who was a good personal friend of my father. And he and another guy in the neighborhood and my father, I said, did a lot of the construction work on the new meeting house. He

lived close to the meeting house and close to the school. In fact, the school property joined his farm. But he was a wealthy guy in those days and owned a big, big tract of land. And from my house to the school, if I went around the road it would be about two and a quarter miles. But if I went through the woods across his property to the school – his property joined ours. And there was a pathway through there, and it was very hilly, and woods all the way, and a big creek in the middle. And I walked to and from school, and there were paths for us to walk when a lot of kids were walking through there. But halfway through the woods, there were paths coming in from each side. So that going to school, we walked – not every day going to school, we wouldn't join up with the others – some of them would be ahead of us, some behind us. But when school was out, we all walked together halfway through. And then, a third of them went one way, and a third the other way, and the other third on toward my place. And I used to talk to my kids when we had young children about my experience walking through the woods and going to school. And when I started writing this book I was age eighty-six. And I had lots of conversations with my kids about my experience in the younger days. I was ten years old when the Depression hit. And I talked about that experience walking through the woods every day going to and from school. I had another title for the book until I drafted it and got it ready to print. And my son talked me into changing the name of it to *Uphill Both Ways* because that's the way he remembered what I told him about walking through the woods to school.

KS: What was your other title going to be?

SM: I can't remember. Something about *Growing up in Randolph County* or something like that.

KS: Well, this is a wonderful title.

KS: Now what was your favorite part, you think, growing up on the farm? Because you talk a lot in your book about fishing and milking – helping thresh wheat.

SM: I was ten years old when the Depression hit. And my dad, one year before the Depression, was not a great farmer because, being Quakers, they wouldn't grow any tobacco. They grew cotton for the cash crop. One of the most interesting things to me growing up was that our farm was in an area where several farms around were all rented by J.P. Morgan in New York City for their quail hunting. And they paid us a good price to have permanent permission to come to our place any day of the year during the season to shoot quail. And they started – they had a place in Climax to keep their dogs and their equipment, their hunting material and so forth. And they would come in on a train out of New York. The train would dock in Climax on a siding there, and the guy that kept the dogs would take them wherever they wanted to go to bird hunt that day. And they frequently came down the road to our place. And I remember growing up watching them shoot quail. And when we started hunting, and we had good hunting dogs, when we would go

out to hunt with my older brothers, the last thing our dad would say when we left the house was, “Don’t you shoot at a single quail, because we need that money for taxes.”

KS: So, how often did J.P. Morgan and his troop come down?

SM: Well, they came two or three times every season. And they had that property – what he would call it, not rented, but they paid a price for it for many years. I guess ten or fifteen years at least.

KS: So, of all the places he could have gone to hunt, he trained down here to North Carolina. That’s incredible.

SM: North Carolina. And Randolph County was a good hunting area.

KS: It’s amazing. So, what other kinds of things did you do growing up on the farm? What were your responsibilities?

SM: Well, my responsibilities were to do whatever my dad said do. We had cows to milk, and I learned to milk when I was quite young. But we didn’t have very good rules about who would milk. So, we argued a lot about who was going to milk the cows. But I did my share of that when I was quite young. And I never had any – I never had grandfathers that I knew, because both of my grandfathers were dead when I was born. And also one grandmother. So, the only grandparents I knew was one grandmother who was a great influence and helped me in lots of ways growing up. And she’s lived at that old big house down in lower Randolph County, where one of her children was very active in Holly Springs meeting. And she was chairman of the women’s section of the meeting. I don’t know whether you know about this or not, but in those days, the Quakers had a business meeting in the Quaker meeting house. They didn’t let the women and the men sit together. They divided them. They had two meetings to discuss the same subjects with a woman chairman of one, and a man chairman of the other. And then, they didn’t vote, they just came up with a consensus. And when the two meetings were over, the chairpersons got together and brought up the consensus that they both agreed on. The Quakers said if they met together, so many of the women wouldn’t talk. They would wait and give a lesson to their husbands. And they didn’t want to leave out those smart women. And they were so interested in education for women students that they saw to it that all the girls got the same opportunity to go to school that the men did. And Guilford College was one of those schools and was the third school in the United States to have co-education from the beginning. And the very first class in 1837 at Guilford College – there were twenty-five boys and twenty-five girls in the class. So, we had that kind of thing. And growing cotton for tax purposes, instead of tobacco, I spent a lot of time in the cotton fields working, plowing for cotton, and cultivating it as it was growing up. And then, picking it when the time came to pick it because it was all hand-picked. And that’s a big job to do. My grandmother in lower Randolph County was so

- involved with honeybees, you wouldn't believe it. At one time, she had eighteen stands of honeybees, and I've never been to – she lived with my uncle, Cecil, my father's younger brother, in that big house down there. And we used to go down there frequently, very frequently, for visits and Sunday lunch or Saturday lunch. And I've never been to that dining room that it didn't have a big jar of honey in the middle of the table for everybody to enjoy.
- KS: What was your grandmother's name?
- SM: Well, Elma. Elma Macon. And her picture is in the book, and there's a chapter in there about her. She lived to be ninety-six nearly, and she was one – she was a widow for forty-six years after her husband died.
- KS: Goodness.
- SM: I used to – we used to talk about the fact that he died in that big home down in lower Randolph County, and his body was taken to the cemetery in a wagon. And when she died forty-six years later, I went to her funeral. And it was a big, nice hearse. And we talked about the wagon. And I walked around to the shed where the wagon was still there that she – that her husband used to get to the cemetery.
- KS: Did y'all spend your holidays at your grandmother's house? Was that too much of a production to move all those children over there?
- SM: [Laughs] When I was growing up as a young kid, of course, all of us went there, and the children went at various times and stayed sometime because they had plenty of guest rooms and because Grandmother was there. She wanted to see the grandchildren and that sort of thing. I went there so frequently and stayed a week at a time during the summer. And my favorite person outside of my own family was a first cousin named Burton. And I spent a lot of time with Burton down there. And his hobby was crystal set radios, and he taught me how to use a crystal set radio. And then, when I got a little older, about ten years old, he taught me how to make one.
- KS: What is that?
- SM: A crystal set radio? Well, it's unbelievable now. It's a little – it's a little cardboard box with a lot of copper wire around it, and a set of headphones so you could listen. And a little piece of something that looked like a piece of jewelry and a little brush-looking thing that sat on that particular piece of jewelry. It was a crystal with a little something like a toothbrush made out of wire that connected it all together. And it had no batteries. And it was amazing that somebody figured out how to get a radio that would work. And we used to listen to that radio with a station in Pennsylvania and a station somewhere else. I've forgotten where.
- KS: It would pick up that far?

SM: It would pick up that far, and I listened. I heard Calvin Coolidge's death reported on the crystal set radio. And when I got to be ten years old, Burton helped me get a cardboard – brown cardboard box and wrapped it with copper wire, and I ordered a crystal set with a thing to go on it and so forth, and he helped me put the whole thing together. And I used an old pair of his headphones where he had replaced them with better ones. And I had my own crystal set radio. And I brought it back to northern Randolph County, climbed up a cedar tree down close to the barn, ran a pole out the top, put a wire on there like a phone wire and ran it to the second story of my home building where I put insulation on it and got it through the window and inside. And I had my own crystal set radio there with a grounding wire that went down beside a tree in the yard. And I had an iron rod driven in the ground for protection from lightening and so forth to have that thing put together. And I used to spend a lot of time listening to a crystal set radio.

KS: Did your family have a family radio that y'all listened to for entertainment?

SM: No, none whatsoever. And didn't have it until a long time after other people did. There was a family in our community that had a radio. And on Saturday night we'd frequently walk a mile to go there so we could listen to the radio at night. And I've done that lots of times. And the lady that grew up in that family ended up being my fifth-grade teacher and married my two-thirds brother.

KS: Do you remember your favorite shows on the radio?

SM: Well, that's been a long time ago. And it was *Amos and Andy* and some of those old, old, old story things.

KS: So, when did you graduate out of the two-room school house into another school as you were growing up?

SM: When I was in the fourth grade, they started building a consolidated high school and elementary school building right beside the building we were in. It was being built by the county rather than by the church meeting house. And that's why I didn't do very well in the fourth grade because, in addition to listening to what was going on inside, I was always looking out the window at what they were doing building this new great building over there. And it was amazing to me because they were putting in a water system with indoor plumbing. The old building had an outhouse, and it had a well with a winless where you let the bucket down, get a bucket of water and wind it up. And it had one dipper for all the school kids who needed water during the day. And somebody would go out there and wind the bucket up and get the dipper and have a drink and pass the dipper around. And the woods were so close by that a lot of people didn't use the outhouse. We went to the woods instead.

KS: So, you moved into that school once it was built?

SM: We moved into that school for my fifth grade. And what a school that was. It had water, dug a well, and I watched that happen. They put in a big tank and a pump. And they had a little motor to run the pump until the water would get to a certain level, and then it would cut off. And they had – didn't have a sewer system. So, they had to build a facility down in the lower side of the school property on the edge of Mr. Chandliss' property line, where they had the system for protection against the bad water.

KS: So, how did you like going to school – that must have been a very different environment?

SM: Totally different environment. And my teacher ended up being the wife of my older brother. And she was the sister of the principal of the school. And those two sisters were the daughters of my father's third – second close friend, and they worked together in building not nice homes, but building barns and outdoor facilities for the farmers to keep their horses and hay and all that stuff. And that was – their last name was Cox, and they had an unfortunate thing when lightning struck their barn over in their home where we used to go to listen to the radio. And they got the horses out, but the barn burned down. And then the neighbors got together and said, "We're going to build them a new barn." And I was disappointed that I didn't get to be one of the workers. They got one of my older brothers to be – to represent our family in the building of the new barn. But I watched it go up and wished I were – had been assigned to work on it.

KS: So, the community built the barn back? That's wonderful.

SM: The community built the barn back, yeah. Then, one of the things that I learned to do early was to shoot rifles. Because we had good hunting dogs – and we went hunting a lot, not for quail, but for – hunting dogs that would run rabbits all day long. And then, at night the same two dogs would go possum hunting and hunt for possums all night. And the amazing thing to me that those two dogs would not even pay attention to a rabbit at night. Rabbit runs right across in front of them, they wouldn't pay any attention to it or wouldn't chase it, wouldn't bark at it. They would continue to hunt possums.

KS: Those rabbits and possums were to eat?

SM: Rabbits, we ate a lot of rabbits, and I went hunting with my older brothers before I could take a gun. They were glad to have me to carry the rabbits, dead rabbits. And then, possums later. And I learned that one of the best ways for a kid to make some money was to stretch possum hides and let them dry and then, keep them until the season was over. And then, bundle them up and ship them to an outfit whose name and address I had in those days located in St. Louis, Missouri, because they would buy possum hides. And they were making women's fur coats out of possum hides during the Depression.

KS: Goodness gracious. I had no idea.

SM: Isn't that right? Isn't that something?

KS: That is something.

SM: And possum hides would bring fifty cents apiece, almost all of them would bring that much. And some of the good ones and the big ones would bring a dollar. And some of them a dollar and a half. So, I could go possum hunting and take a sack along to catch the live possums, hang the sack over my shoulder and bring the possums home. And we wouldn't kill them. When a possum – you shake the tree, and the possum falls to the ground, it stays quiet for a few seconds until it gets up to run. So, you can always catch it immediately and put it in a sack during that period when it's very quiet. And it's amazing what possum hunting was like. You needed two or three good people to work at it because somebody – the dogs would tree a possum up a tree. Somebody had to decide who was going to climb the tree to shake the possum out, who's going to hold the dogs to keep them from killing the possum when it falls, and who's going to catch the possum and put it in the sack, and who is going to carry the sack. So, it would take three or four people to do good possum hunting at night. And when we got home with the possums we didn't – we had a place in what we called a potato hill house, a little shed where we kept our potatoes during the winter covered up. And we had a box in there for live possums where we would feed them out of kitchen stuff leftover from the kitchen. And feed them carefully for a week or two to get their bodies cleaned out with all the junk they had been eating in the woods. And then, after they had been in there a few weeks we could kill a possum. And my dad would enjoy – let us skin it to keep the – and stretch the hide. And then, he would cook the parts of the possum.

[Mrs. Macon enters the room]

KS: Hey, Mrs. Macon, I'm Kathelene Smith. It's nice to see you. I'm sorry. Do I have your chair?

HM: That's all right.

KS: Are you sure?

HM: Yeah.

SM: My first wife, Hazel. We're going to have our seventieth anniversary on June 27th this year.

KS: That's wonderful. We were doing an oral history for the Rotary Club, and your husband was telling me about possum hunting. I tell you what, I would be afraid

to keep possums around the house. I would be afraid they'd bite. I mean around the property. We always were taught that possums could bite you.

SM: We kept them in a cage, and you would be very careful. And we didn't handle them. We just opened the place – a door to pour in the food and water for them.

KS: Did you sell the rabbits, too, the rabbit fur?

SM: The rabbit hides wouldn't be worth more than a penny a piece.

KS: Really?

SM: Five cents apiece. We didn't fool with them.

KS: Because I would thought they would want to make rabbit coats, too.

SM: No.

KS: Just possum. That's interesting.

SM: Possum hides were much more valuable than rabbit hides. We didn't even stretch the rabbit hides.

KS: Now, when you were in middle school, what were your favorite things to study?

SM: Middle school?

KS: I guess junior high school?

SM: Junior – well, let me tell you the amazing thing. When this high school was built, and the first year it operated when I was in the fifth grade, they had only two graduates of the eleventh grade. And when I was in the sixth grade, they tried to have a baseball team – the high school baseball team – and they didn't have enough players, because the high school is so small, it was new in the community. And I went out for baseball, high school baseball, when I was in the sixth grade.

KS: Wow!

SM: And they, some of them didn't think very highly of that. And they decided they'd figure out a way to get me off – get me disinterested in baseball. So, when I went out, they put me in as a new catcher. They had a good catcher, but he was also a good shortstop. So, they moved him to shortstop and put me in as the catcher. And for six years instead of four, I played high school baseball as the catcher, and that's the reason I've got some crooked fingers.

KS: So, you were very experienced by the time you graduated?

SM: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, pretty good player.

KS: And then, you went to Guilford College?

SM: Went to Guilford College.

KS: But it sounds like from your book that education was very important in your family. Your brothers were instrumental in getting you involved?

SM: Very, very important. And my oldest brother, I told you that he didn't have a place to go to high school. When he was living in southern Randolph County, and there was no high school down there. He and a good friend of his went to Liberty, North Carolina, rented an automobile garage – just a drive-in garage with nothing in it, just a covered roof and walls, and a drive-in garage. And they put in a couple of cots and put in a little stove and fixed that as a place to live. And they both went all the way through high school, four years, in Liberty. And when he graduated from there he went immediately to Guilford College. And when he graduated at Guilford he was the best – had the best grades of anybody in his class, won a scholarship to Haverford, Pennsylvania, and went there to get his Master's degree. And he was so thrilled with that, that when he got his Master's degree, he enrolled in the University of Chicago and got his PhD. And after he got that, he got married – Leila Cox, my fifth-grade teacher was his new wife in the old building, old meeting house building at Providence. And soon thereafter they tore that building down and built the new one. But – in 19 – in the year of the Depression or the year immediately following the year of the Depression, I helped load his car together. He had an old A-Model Ford of some kind, and I helped load the car where he and his wife drove to Auburn, Alabama, where he was the financial professor for Auburn University one year after the Depression started. And the Depression was so bad in Alabama that they used scrip instead of money. And he was doing very well until – living there and teaching and using scrip for grocery money until the grocery – the Depression got so bad that the local grocery stores announced that they would no longer take scrip for money. He didn't have any reserves, and he didn't have any choice other than to give up teaching and join the new TVA program, Tennessee Valley Authority program that the government was starting in Tennessee. But there was a lot of discussion at that time that the headquarters of it would be moved to Alabama eventually. So, he started with TVA when it was brand new. And because of his education and financial world, he spent a lot of his time helping counties in Tennessee that had so many big TVA lakes being built that it ruined so much of the farmland and it disrupted their tax programs so that their – all their taxation had to be reorganized and readjusted. And his – that was such an unusual assignment, that he reported directly to the head of the TVA and worked at that until a few years later he still wanted to be a teacher. So, he talked TVA into giving him a summer vacation so he could go to Chapel Hill to the University of North Carolina and teach in summer school. But at the end of the summer he realized for the first time that he

was – education world wasn't paying like the government. So, he gave up teaching permanently and went back to TVA and worked there until he retired. And he helped me a lot when he would come home and talk with his dad at night about everything he can think of going on in the country, and I'd listen carefully at everything he said, and I was so engrossed with his knowledge and ability, and that sort of thing. And he and his wife tried to talk me into coming to Knoxville and living with them and going to the University of Tennessee. But I wanted to go to Guilford where I had been planning to go all my life. And it's a good thing, because if I had gone to Tennessee I wouldn't have met this wife.

KS: So, how was Guilford? Was it wonderful? Was it what you expected?

SM: You can't believe how bad it was, because this was the middle of the Depression. And I needed to tell you that my dad got a loan on his farm property to buy twenty-five acres of land on Friendly Avenue less than a mile out here from where we are now to just before you get to that big bridge – Friendly Avenue, he bought twenty-five acres on the left side of Friendly going west. And they built a new street out there, a stop light, just before you get to the bridge, and the street going south through was built there, the new street. And they call it – what is it? Can't call it right now. But it's a trail type street name. And they built that new street straight through the middle of his property which was sold after he died. And all of the twenty-five acres faces Friendly Avenue on this side, and it borders on the Presbyterian Church that's down on the other side. And had two streets on the outside for houses to be built. And there was nothing – it was a farm property when he bought it. He bought it one year before the Depression. He died – that would have been 1928. He died in 1940, the year I graduated from Guilford College, and I was the executor for the estate. And had to sell that property immediately to raise some money to pay off the two mortgages, one on the other farm, and one on this property. And some other debts that he had accumulated over the years. And I got some real estate advice as to how best to sell that twenty-five acres. We decided on a public auction, advertised it well, and had the auction out there. And the public auction in the first months of 1941, that twenty-five acres of land on Friendly Avenue bought a total of \$2,000. That's how bad finances were in those days. And his reason for buying that property was so all of his children could go to Guilford as day students. And since I had to go to Guilford as a regular student, I had to work a lot to pay my way as much as I could. And my older brother, Leonard, graduated from Guilford the year I went there. And he was working a lot. And the head of the superintendent of buildings and grounds that he worked for was a good hunter, and Leonard used to bring him down to our farm hunting. So, I got acquainted with him before I went to Guilford. And when I went there – I got ready to go there – he talked me into coming two months early before school started so I could work all day every day. And let them accumulate my pay rather than pay me, accumulate it at the office so that when it got time for school to start and I had to pay tuition, I'd have enough over there to make a payment on it. And all of my work was labor, hauling coal from the station over here and to create a coal pile for the furnace for the winter.

And mowing grass. We had a power mower, but it was the walking type, not a riding type. And I mowed that campus many times with a walking mower. And did everything you could think of to make – assignments from the superintendent of buildings and grounds to help keep the campus in good shape. And all of that work was twenty-five cents an hour. And at twenty-five cents an hour it takes forty hours to make ten dollars. And you can imagine how difficult it was to make enough money working to pay room, board, and tuition. Couldn't possibly do it.

KS: Well, how did you have enough energy to go to school and date pretty girls?

SM: Well, he helped me figure out my classes' schedule. And I wasn't sure what I was wanting to take anyway. So, I listened to him. But he didn't want me taking any afternoon classes, because I could work all afternoon without interruption. He didn't want me to take any Saturday classes and so forth. So, I listened to him and went to work there and worked manual labor for three years, and I got enough recognition. I was a C student but a pretty good one. And I got enough recognition so that my fourth year, a professor in economics where I was majoring asked me to give up my manual labor for the year and work with him as his assistant to keep his records, and that sort of thing. And I did that for that professor my senior year. And worked all day, and during vacation I worked every day during fall break and spring break and Christmas holidays except on Christmas Day, he let me go home spend Christmas Day with my family.

KS: Goodness.

SM: But I spent so much time, full-time service, that I was able to pay a lot of that expense. And, of course, expense was much lower then than it is now. But Hazel and I met there. I was – I went in '36. She came in '37. And we were assigned seating together in alphabetical order in compulsory chapel, because her last name was Monsees. Mine was Macon. So, we were seated together in compulsory chapel. And the reason I was in freshman chapel still my sophomore year was because I had to take some courses that were not available to me in the little school down in Randolph County in order to qualify for my sophomore classes at Guilford. So, I was still classified as a freshman for chapel purposes. We seated together four times a week for chapel. And after chapel was over we would walk together to the next building for our next class. I walked behind her for a while, but she looked good from behind and front. So, I started walking with her. And we started dating there when she was a freshman and I was a sophomore. And I graduated in '40, and she graduated in '41. She didn't have any money either. So, she had a favorite teacher who was her basketball coach and her favorite teacher who graduated from Guilford a couple of years earlier, and she tried to talk Hazel parents into sending her to Guilford College. And they didn't have the money enough to do it. So, she wrote a letter to the president and the dean over at Guilford and told them about this great student who was valedictorian of her high school class with good grades and a great basketball player. And they drove to High Rock Lake Southmont, got the teacher, and the three of them went to

Hazel's parents and tried to talk them into figuring out a way to let her go to Guilford. They never could convince them because they didn't have any money. And that teacher – I never heard of anybody else doing this, but that teacher signed a note for her room, board, and tuition for one year. I'm not talking about cosigning it for their parents. Her parents didn't even sign it. She signed the note herself and got the principal of the high school, who knew Hazel well, to co-sign the note, and that's how she got to Guilford College in the middle of the Depression in '37.

KS: That's very impressive.

SM: And when we graduated we had to pay off those – we paid off all those notes with interest. I've got the notes in the file with a list of the payments on the back of each one. And some of those payments were as low as \$7 a month. So, we figured out a way to get a college education at Guilford College.

KS: That's great. After you got – so, you graduated from college, then y'all got married. Do I remember you went off to Florida?

SM: Well, I never had but one job. I started – I tried to work with Burlington Industries. I went there when I graduated to get a – try to get a job. I went immediately to my home in Randolph County because there my mother wasn't well. My father had just died. And her two youngest children, younger than me, was a brother who had had physical problems and had to have part of his lungs removed. And he wasn't able to do much on the farm. And then, the other child was the first female in the family of children. And I worked down there a few weeks and came to the conclusion that I could never help them very much until I got a job that paid some money. So, I came back, went to Burlington Industries for interviews, and they gave me tests and interviews and so forth. And ended up by saying that I was qualified, but they weren't hiring anybody now. So, the guy that I'd been talking to the most at Burlington Industries said, "You ought to go over to Jefferson Standard. I understand they're hiring some people." I thought Jefferson Standard was an office building. I didn't know it was a life insurance company. I went over there and went to the personnel department. And he welcomed me in. Said, "Yes, I've talked to the personnel man over at Burlington Industries about you. And I've got a lot of information already about you" and so forth, and so forth. We had a good interview. And he ended up giving me some tests and some paperwork and so forth. And he ended up hiring me as a new employee at Jefferson Standard at seventy-five dollars a month. And that was five dollars more than they were paying high-school graduates because – I got an extra five because I was a college graduate.

So, I started working there in the file department because at that time it was before computers. And every policy they had ever issued they had a file on it in the one big floor on the – that old building down there that was built in the early '20s. And I worked there in the file cabinet as a file clerk for a number of

months. And then, they transferred me to the mail room where they wanted me to help sort the mail that came in every day, figure out who to take it to in the company, and then carry it and deliver it to the various people because they were trying to train me how – who did what and where each department was located and how to divide mail. And I had senior mail people there to help me learn how to do all that. Then I started carrying mail and delivering it. That was my method of finding out who does what, and where they're located, and get acquainted with them and that sort of thing. So, after a number of months with that, they transferred me to Raleigh, which was one of their best branch offices, because of the guy that worked in that office who was a graduate of Davidson and captain of the Davidson football team and was a very knowledgeable person and knew what to do. So, I spent six or eight months there with him learning everything I could about his operation. Back in those days every policy-holder paid premiums into the branch office, not the home office. So, every day he taught me how to get all that income coming in by mail or over the counter and find out what every dime of it was for, keep a record on cards for every policy-holder on what was paid for and so forth. And if it was being paid for policy loans and that sort of thing. I had to keep all those records on cards. And then, at the end of the day – of course they had to make a big bank deposit every day because the cash was coming in in large amounts. And then, at the end of the day I had to make an accounting report to the home office so that they could keep the records in those files that I had been looking after. And the other ways every dime that came in had to be deposited, recorded in the branch office, and mailed to the home office with an accounting report for what to do with the money there to take care of every policy-holder's obligations. And that was quite a job. And I worked at it very hard, and he was a great instructor.

I lived close enough in a boarding house so that I could walk to and from the office to limit my expenses and so forth. And then, the war came – got closer and closer. And the Tampa – they called us cashiers in those days because we were looking after all that money – the cashier in the Tampa, Florida, branch office joined the Navy. I got a long-distance call from Greensboro to get on the train and go to Tampa to take this new job to replace that cashier. In the meantime, Hazel had gotten through college, was teaching school, and they decided in high school – she had decided to come to the old high school, Providence Community High School, where my mother lived fairly close to it. Because then I could come home on weekends from Raleigh and see her and my mother and so forth. And she got down there in the country in a boarding school, boarding house for the school teachers. And she hadn't been there long till I got transferred to Tampa, and she found herself down there in an unusual situation. She finished the year there and then the next year she got a teaching place over in Linwood, North Carolina, close to where she grew up. And I was in Tampa, Florida. And then, we decided to get married. I didn't have enough money to come home to get married, and she didn't have enough money to come to Tampa to get married. So, we decided that we would meet in Atlanta, Georgia, where her uncle was pastor of a church and could handle the wedding ceremonies. So, she

and her nephew, and her mother, got on a train and went to Greensboro to Tampa. I got on a train the same day, came overnight from Tampa to Atlanta. I said they went to Tampa. They went to Atlanta. Met me in Atlanta, and we all met at her uncle's home. We didn't have the wedding in a church. We had it in his living room, and we're the only couple I ever knew that was married one and one half times because we started the ceremony in his living room, and we got halfway through, and his wife stood up and started waving her hands. And he said, "What in the world is the problem?" She said, "I promised my next-door neighbor that I would bring them over here for the ceremony." And we all laughed. And he said, "Go next door and get them and we'll wait for you." So, she went next door and brought them. Instead of picking up where he left off, he started over again from the beginning for the whole ceremony.

KS: So, you married twice just for good measure, huh. Twice as married?

SM: And the preacher wouldn't take any money, and his wife fixed us a great lunch for all of us who were there. Hazel and I caught a Greyhound bus to Tampa by going by Macon, Georgia, and decided for namesake to stay there for our first night. And her mother and nephew came back on the train to Greensboro. And when we went – we checked in at the hotel and got the bridal suite. Then went down to a recommended restaurant a block away for dinner. And when we came back, here was one of our friends from Guilford College, a student who was in military service and was seated in a rocking chair there waiting. So, we met him as we were going in. Then the next day we caught the bus and went on to Tampa where I had arranged for an apartment with everything – furnished apartment. And in that kitchen we had a little gas thing you put a quarter in to get gas to do the cooking. We always had to keep some extra quarters there in case the first quarter gave out when – in the middle of the cooking of the bread or something.

KS: So, you had to cook fast.

SM: And would you believe the bedroom and the living room were the same. And we had a bed that would turn up endways and roll into a closet.

KS: Like a Murphy bed?

SM: Murphy bed.

SM: And that's where we started off paying our rent together, and I hadn't been there for a short time for dinner with Hazel's cooking until I found a note by my plate one night, and it said, "My culinary skill is wasted on those who salt before they've tasted." So, that was the last time I ever put salt on food. I think one of the reasons I'm here at age ninety-three is because I didn't eat very much salt.

KS: That will do it. Now, from what I understand from your book, you weren't there for too long till you got drafted.

SM: Four months. Four months, and I got notice for my draft – from my draft board in Asheboro, the county seat for Randolph County. And came home to catch the bus, and when I went to the bus, reported to the draft board, they had selected me to be chairman of the group to go to somewhere in South Carolina to our first military base. I think it was Columbia, Fort Jackson, or somewhere. And I told Hazel goodbye, and got on that bus, and went down there. And that was some experience.

KS: So, what was that like?

SM: Well, it was terrible. You can't believe what it was like. I went down there, and they put me through a line with no shirt on, and they were giving me vaccinations in both arms at the same time. And then, they sent me somewhere else for a few weeks, and then they sent me back to St. Petersburg, Florida, across the bay from Tampa where we all checked in an old fourth-rate hotel. They didn't have any military bases at that time. That was 1942, and the war was already underway. So, they were getting us up early, and lining us up in front of the hotel and marching us to the beach where we were drilling up and down the sandy beach, carrying a broomstick instead of a gun. And one day I had only a few weeks – been there a few weeks when we went out and were being lined up to march to the beach. And I heard my name called over the loudspeaker. And the person in charge of the unit that was training us told me where to go to report in and not go to the beach that day.

So, I went, and they were interviewing people with a whole series of interviews, giving all kinds of tests, including IQ tests and everything else. Talking to us about our experience, our education, our training, and so forth. And because of that training I had received from Jefferson Standard with all this financial stuff, they selected me as one of three people to put on the train to come back to a unit that was being started in Southern Pines, North Carolina, known as the Army Air Corps Research Department to keep records – statistical department I should have said – to keep records on all the Air Force schools in the United States. And that was my assignment there. And I was being trained to do this. And Hazel was planning already to come to St. Petersburg to see me at Christmas time when school was out. Or maybe it was spring time when the school was out. I can't remember. But, anyway, she came to Southern Pines to see me, and I got a three-day pass. And we were spending three nights together and reading the local paper, and they had a great big ad, half a page in the local paper, "needed civil service workers in the new statistical unit for the Army Air Corps." She went there and applied for a job, and they hired her and put her in the same office with me.

KS: Well, that worked out great!

SM: And they were reluctant to hire her, because teachers were badly needed. But they –

HM: The colonel who hired me said I would have to get permission from my principal.

KS: Oh, to leave, huh?

HM: Yeah.

SM: Well, we worked there together in a short period of time because that unit was new, and it was growing like crazy, and it outgrew the space. They had taken over an old hotel. And they had built some barracks beside the hotel and had that unit there. And the unit outgrew the facilities, and they didn't – we should have been transferred to Washington, but all the places there were taken, too. So, the new Army Air Corps arranged to take over a fifteen-story office building in downtown Fort Worth, Texas. And they said to us that they were going to transfer all of us – all militaries – on a certain day to Fort Worth, Texas. All the civil service people who wanted to go would be transferred at government expense with the military. And we were assigned a certain day to go. And the train would leave at a certain time one night from Southern Pines to New Orleans where we would change trains and go from there to Fort Worth. And they assigned Hazel a private upper berth, and they assigned me to share a lower berth with a corporal that I had been working with. And we knew each other so well we got together with the corporal, and he and Hazel traded sleeping quarters. And I shared this lower berth with Hazel on the way to New Orleans – got by fine because everybody in the train was from the same unit. They all knew us, and knew we were married. So, we didn't have any problems. But when we got to New Orleans and changed trains, we were scattered out all over the vacancies on a long train, in many different cars.

So, the first night Hazel and I were sharing the lower berth, and the very first night about midnight somebody was tapping on the side of the thing. So, I opened the curtain to see who it was, and here was two military policemen and two or three military guards, and a couple of railroad conductors there wanting to know what I was doing sleeping in this lower berth with this pretty girl. And I didn't have any of my marriage certificates in my pajama pockets. And I tried to convince that we were married, and we were working together, and we were going to Fort Worth. She was civil service being transferred, and I was military. And they argued with us and didn't believe us, and we were making so much noise at midnight in the Pullman car that finally the curtain opened at the upper berth in the lower section of the car, and a guy stuck his head out. And he said, "I'm captain so and so, and I'm in this unit. And I know they're married, and they've been working together in the unit but being transferred and so forth." So, they were afraid to not be careful. They were afraid to get in trouble. So, they finally said – they talked very seriously about taking me off at the next station and so forth. But then, they finally decided to let me alone until they checked it out

further. So, the next morning when we went to the dining car for breakfast and walked in, a lot of people pointed at us and whispered to each other that that's the one who was giving the trouble last night.

So, we got to Fort Worth in the middle of August, in the middle of the day. Temperature was a hundred and two, and we had corresponded with – it's interesting because one of her uncles was a pastor of a church in Atlanta when we got married – and short time thereafter we had been corresponding with another one of her uncles who was pastor of the biggest Baptist Church in Fort Worth. And he was – we had written him to see if he could find us a place to live, because they said, "No, you won't be on a base. You got to get your own apartment." We didn't have a car. So, we had to get an apartment on the bus line. He had worked at finding an apartment for us, but said he wouldn't be there. He and his wife were going to be in another state where he had a series of meetings going and to get off the train, go by the church, get the key to my house, and I'll leave the instructions with them there, and you can take the cab to my house and go in and make yourself at home until I get back. This was August before air conditioning in Fort Worth, Texas. And nobody told us that we ought to get on the south side of a building for an apartment because the wind always blows from the south in Texas in the summer. And he had gotten us an apartment on the north side of a building. But it was on the bus line. And we went there to check in, and the lady said, "Well, you got to pay for the apartment and a garage." I said, "We don't have a car. I don't want a garage." She said, "Well, I know, but I can't get the price for the apartment without requiring you to pay the price for the garage because the government had already put limits on prices for rental." We ended up renting a garage and a north side apartment. And the amazing thing was that she wanted two checks because the house faced a street, but it was on a corner so that the side entrance faced another street. She wanted two checks with one of them with the address of the south side entrance, and one with an address of the front entrance so she could get by with charging us more than the law would allow for one apartment. We didn't tell the preacher there, but we wrote those two checks for a while and rented a garage instead. And the wind was blowing from the south, and it was so hot in that apartment upstairs you can't believe it. Hazel one night had to put wet towels on the mattress so she could get cool enough to go to sleep.

KS: Well, I'm from Houston, Texas, and it's hot.

HM: It's hot.

KS: It's so hot.

SM: I want to tell you, we didn't have a car. So, we rode that bus to and from work every day six days a week. We worked all day Saturday, and we never set down on the bus because it was always full going and coming. And we had stood up and held on to the rail up there to get to our – wherever we were going. And we would

go to lunch together every day, go out and find a cheap place to buy something, sandwich for lunch. We went to lunch one day and came back, and our – every unit was headed by a full colonel – and when we walked in on our floor the colonel in charge of our unit was laughing. He said, “Come in here. I got to tell you something.” So, we went in to listen to him. And he said, “When you went out, the two of you went out together to lunch, the colonel from upstairs was here talking with me. And he saw the two of you going out to catch the elevator for lunch. And he said, ‘I believe if the war lasts long enough that sergeant is going to marry that girl.’” We worked in that same unit down there until the war was over. And I was in charge of keeping records on all of the Air Force schools. And I got a head count. They wanted to know how many students were in every school in any given day. I got each school to give me a head count, and that was my balance for my bank account, and I kept that record as the balance. And then, every day – every notice we got that they were transferring in new students, then they asked the school how many. That was a deposit. And then, when they graduated or flunked out and had to be assigned somewhere, that was writing a check. So, I kept bank records. They didn’t have any program for doing it. So, I set up my own bank book recordkeeping program for those schools and kept them that way.

And when the war got a little further along, they brought in a series of WACs [Women’s Army Corps], twenty – they were only about twenty-five enlisted men in this building. And they brought in a series of WACs for our floor, put one assigned to each enlisted man, and said to the enlisted men, “Your job is to teach this WAC how to do your work within thirty days. Thirty days from now she’ll be promoted to be in charge of what you’re doing. You’ll go overseas.” So, that was – shocked us all, but we were working at it the best we could. Before the thirty days was over, every WAC that was brought in except one had asked for a transfer saying, “There was no way I can do this.” And the one who didn’t want to be transferred said, “I can’t replace this guy and do this job, but I like what he’s doing so well, that I want to be his assistant and stay here and help him do it.” So, they kept one WAC and transferred the others out. And that WAC stayed there until the war was over, and she was separated from the service as we were – as I was, and after we got home and got a – bought a new car, we took a vacation and drove to New England where she lived, and had a visit with her. But after that experience, the next thing that happened was they brought a bunch of retired Air Force pilots from London who had completed fifty missions over Germany and were entitled to rest and relaxation. They had brought them home on their B-17 bombers and assigned them to our unit, and the colonel put one captain pilot with fifty records with my desk. And he was one of the nicest people I’ve ever met in military service. And he and I became very close friends, and I was working with him and just getting along real well. He was from Ohio. He talked with me about how many schools – these Air Force schools I had visited. I said, “I’ve never visited a single one.” He said, “Well, you’re going to, because I have to do some flying every month to keep my records up, and you can figure out which school

you want to visit the most, and we'll go fly there and get a three-day pass, and you can visit the school, and I'll get my flying for my requirement."

So, I got a three-day pass and told him I wanted to go to Ft. Lauderdale in Florida to visit that school, because it was doing some work, getting ready for the new computers that I had been hearing about that hadn't – I hadn't had any experience with yet. So, I wanted to go to that school. And we got our – I got my pass, and we got on the plane and flew down there. And checked into the hotel, and went to the school, and went to the entrance. They had checked his papers very well and said to the Captain, "You can get in." They checked mine, and said, "They're not eligible for you to get in." So, I never got in the front door of the schoolroom. He went in and I waited for him until he got out, and we got a cab back to the hotel. And the next morning we checked out and got his plane from there, got on his plane at the airport and flew back home. [Both laugh] But he, then, soon thereafter reported to the Colonel that he did his tours in Germany. He was assigned back to the States for a temporary period of time for rest and relaxation. And he said, "After finding out what this guy does, I realized there's no rest and relaxation involved in this assignment, and I want to be transferred somewhere else." So, that was the second try that didn't work. The third time they said, "We're going to hire civil service people," I mean "Individual people to replace you." And then, after a few weeks of that they said, "We haven't been able to find anybody that would work at this kind of a job, because they all are in the military service or have better jobs than this," and so forth. So then, the war was coming to an end, and we – I thought I'd be losing my furlough time. I didn't realize they would pay for it.

So, Hazel and I arranged to take a trip to the West Coast. Neither one of us had been any further West than Fort Worth, Texas. And so, there was a chaplain there that we had gotten acquainted with, not in our unit, but working with another unit there. And he had a little boy. They had a little boy, how old was he, five or six years old? Maybe seven. Anyway, they needed our gas coupons, because they didn't have enough gas to drive their car all the way to the West Coast. But with us going with them and giving them our gas coupons, we could go together. So, the five of us started West. And what a trip that was. We enjoyed the scenery and talked a lot about where we were going and so forth. And then, when we got out there in Nevada, we decided to go through Reno and Las Vegas and we went to – stopped in Reno and went to lunch in a restaurant, nice looking restaurant there and had a good lunch. And we came out, paid our bill, and came out, and we were getting ready to through the exit door and go to the car and get ready to drive further West, and here were slot machines on either side of the door in the restaurant. Hazel called the little boy in front of his parents and said, "Come over here. I want to educate you on these machines that are designed to take all your money." So, it was a quarter machine. So, she got a couple of quarters and put them in this slot machine, pulled the lever, and she hit the jackpot, quarters rolled out all over the floor, all over the place. And the little boy got down on his knees and picked up quarters and put them in some container they furnished there

and so forth. And we laughed about how she taught this boy how not to use slot machines.

KS: Doesn't it always turn out that way, you know?

SM: So, it just goes on and on. You better cut it [the recorder] off.

KS: No, no. Let's see. I don't want to wear you out. It's [the recorder's] still going along.

SM: What else do you got? We went on to the West Coast, and what do I need to tell about that? We stopped in Salt Lake City.

HM: I can't remember anything we did.

SM: We stopped in Salt Lake City, and where we learned about what was happening there with –

HM: We stopped in Arizona.

SM: Yeah, we stopped in Arizona because there was a place there were one of the brothers of one of the people that we were working with in Fort Worth was running a marriage shop where he was marrying new couples and charging them a little money and making a profit there. So, we stopped, and they –

HM: While we were there a couple came in to be married, and he married them.

SM: And while we were there we went on to the Grand Canyon.

KS: Oh, that's nice!

SM: Checked in at the Grand Canyon on the night before Christmas, in a hotel on the edge of the northern side of the Grand Canyon. And they had a lot of hotels – a lot of facilities there for keeping visitors at night and so forth. And then, we checked in, and it snowed.

KS: Oh, I bet that was beautiful!

SM: It was a beautiful night before Christmas. And we were told over the loud speaker that in a community building down there in a certain place, they were going to have beautiful photographs of the canyon and so forth, and we could go and see. And we started walking down there with all of the clothes that we could put on, and gloves on my hands, and so forth – a big, heavy coat. Walking in the snow where it wasn't cleaned off, but there was a path in the snow where it had been pushed down pretty well so you could walk without getting it into your shoes. And I ended up slipping on some ice and falling in the snow. And I jumped up

and jerked my gloves off and started trying to get my coat off so I could shake the snow off of it and get cleaned up a little bit. And I ended up, after I got cleaned up, realizing that my Guilford College ring had been lost in the snow.

KS: Oh, no!

SM: So, I went on to the program, and after the program was over, came back, checked in back where we were staying. And I told them I wanted to tell them about my ring because I lost it and maybe after the snow melts somebody may find it. And the lady said, “What kind of a ring is it?” So, I told her. And she said – turned around and says, “Somebody has already found it. It’s back here waiting for you.”

KS: Now, that’s amazing!

SM: Ain’t that an amazing story? Said somebody was going down there with a flashlight looking for a good place to walk, and they saw this ring shining back at them, and they picked it up and brought it.

KS: You know, you couldn’t have found that if you tried. If you had gone to look, you know?

SM: But that’s one of the things we remember.

KS: So, after your furlough, did move back here?

SM: We moved – after the furlough, they sent me to San Antonio, Texas, because they didn’t have any provision in the local thing there in Fort Worth on handling all the discharges. So, they sent me to San Antonio for a discharge.

KS: Well, that’s pretty. San Antonio is pretty.

SM: Went down there and came back and got Hazel, and we flew home together on Eastern Airlines. Went back to Jefferson Standard when I got home to tell them I was back ready to go to work, but I didn’t want to go immediately. I wanted to take a couple of weeks’ vacation, because we had been away from our families so long. And they looked at me for a while, and looked at their records, and they said, “Well, if you got to have a vacation, when the two weeks is over, we’ll send you to Denver, Colorado, for the cashier of our Denver office.” And I said, “I don’t want to go that far away. I want to stay close home. We’ve been gone for so long.” And they said, “Well, if you’ll start to work Monday morning, we’ll send you to Asheville.” So, we didn’t take any time off. We went to Asheville. We checked into the local office up there. And it’s amazing how quickly we dropped back into – we stayed in a nice boarding house, and the office was downtown in Asheville, and people were as nice as they could be. And they welcomed us home. And I started to work there as a cashier in Asheville, and enjoyed it, got along fine, was just doing great. And after about six months they sent a vice

president from the home office up there to talk to my boss, the manager of the thing. And talked to me, and Hazel and so forth to see if we wouldn't be interested in moving back to the home office and be in the marketing department at the home office. And I was – I said, "Well, I'm not sure how interested I'll be. I want to know how much income – increase in income I'll get." And they said, "Not much, if any, maybe none now. But maybe later it might be a little better."

So, I came in and interviewed people in the home office, talked to Carl Young, who had been in charge of the marketing department for years. Talked to his assistant, Bob Taylor, who was as nice as he could be, and interviewed a lot of people. And when I came out of the interviews, Bob Taylor asked me what I had decided to do. And I said, "Well, we like it so much in Asheville, I'm not sure with no increase in salary if it would be smart for me to move." And he said, "Well, your increase in salary will come better later. But you'd be making a mistake if you don't move." So, he gave me a real strong talk. And said I ought to come on in here. So, we went back and decided to move to Greensboro. No houses, no apartments had been built. War had been going on.

KS: So, what year was this?

SM: It was 1946. And it was – I got out on Groundhog Day, February 2, and we stayed up there about six or eight months. So, it was in the fall of '46. And we finally found – looked and found a place to stay. And we found the one room in a boarding house on the second floor, sharing a bathroom with another couple on the same floor. And we transferred to Greensboro, and I started to work with the home office and living in that kind of a –

HM: We got that because I knew a teacher living there.

SM: Yeah –

KS: You had connections.

SM: We found – it's a place close to one of the high schools in Greensboro, and she knew one of the teachers. So, we moved in there. Stayed there a few months. And they said, "There's an eight-week program in Texas at Fort Worth and Dallas, Texas." And what was the name of the school? I got it in the book, and I can't remember it right now. But, anyway, they wanted me to go to that eight-week course to learn more about the marketing of life insurance. So, I went there to school for eight weeks. Left Hazel and the little one-room place. No furniture. No nothing. Just our suitcases full of junk. And while I was there I got a telegram that said, "Hi, Dad. I'll be seeing you arriving in the first week in July," or something like that, signed, "Junior." That's how I got notified that Hazel was expecting. And after I finished that program and came home, we were able to find a little apartment on a second floor of an old building on the same street, a little closer to Summit Avenue down on toward the museum. And we moved in there and lived

there for a while until we found out that Jefferson Standard was having so many people come back, former employees come back, and they couldn't find any places to live, that they decided the company was going to build some homes on what is now Jefferson Road – and build these homes on the edge of the Jefferson Standard Country Club property where they had several hundred acres of land. And we had waited too long to get one of those, but they had already built them, and they had eleven or twelve homes there for company employees who worked with the company before they came home. And one of them – in one of the nicest homes, the very first one off of Friendly Avenue on Jefferson Road that they built, the guy's name was Bill Blair, Bill Blair. That doesn't sound right. Can't quite recall it. But, anyway, he called me on the phone, said, "I want to talk to you." And when I went to see him he was working in Jefferson and had a good job there. And he said, "I want to tell you my brother has just been made president of Integon. I think that's the name of the company, life insurance company in Winston-Salem. And he wants me to come there and be his vice president in charge of marketing. And I haven't told anybody in the company about this. But I'm telling you, don't you tell it to anybody. But you go see the personnel department in Jefferson Standard and see if you can get your name on the list for the first vacancy on these company buildings."

So, I went to see the personnel department, H.P. Leek. And when I told him what I wanted he laughed. He said, "You're being ridiculous. Nobody is going to leave this company after having those nice homes built for them out there on that road." But I kept arguing with him and I said, "I'm not trying to get any commitment as to when, but I want my name on the list for the first vacancy in that area because we want to get out of this dirty apartment we're living in and get a nice place as soon as we can. So, he finally said, "OK. I'll put your name on the list for the first one that's vacated." Two or three weeks later, he announced his resignation and move to Winston-Salem, and we moved from that apartment into that beautiful home. By that time I was back and was working and because of the training I had, and because I was working on my CLU, Chartered Life Underwriter designation, out of Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, and where they – I didn't go there to school, but I was taking this course at home studying the books and trying to pass the exam. And I got my CLU exam passed in 1949, and we were living out there in that house. And I'd been promoted to a job – I was assigned to be in charge of new agent training. And I had a school, a week-long school, bringing agents in from all over the country including Puerto Rico – because we had a manager in Puerto Rico that was not a native, and he knew that all the company material was in English and everything. He wouldn't hire an agent unless he could speak English and write English and read English. So, we were bringing agents from Puerto Rico as well as from the States in for a week school. And I was chief instructor. And we had a commencement exercise on Saturday morning before they went on home. And we had a speaker for that occasion who came from a publishing company for the life insurance industry in Indianapolis. He had retired, and I had gotten acquainted with him in this program in Fort Worth – I mean Dallas – that I went back to. And so, we brought him in

for the final speaker. And he was so outstanding in what he was able to tell them about the life insurance industry and how fortunate they are to be in it, and so forth. And he came many times and came a day early so he could meet with us at the Greensboro – at the Jefferson Standard Country Club for a banquet the night before the school would adjourn where I would introduce all the agents who were in the school, tell where they were from and so forth, which I was able to do after working with them for a week without a note. So, I got some recognition for that. And he came and spoke to the group one Friday night and, then, spoke to the class on Saturday. And that gave me a good connection with an outfit in Indiana that I'll tell you about later. And I'm about to use up my voice.

KS: Oh, I'm sorry. I've talked you out.

SM: And that school went on for some time, and I was so successful with it that they gave me a promotion, turned the school over to somebody else, and put me in charge of agent recruiting, which was very difficult to do because every agent that was successful was very happy with his job, but those that were not successful were very easy to move on to some other job. So, I was in charge of agent recruiting and my assignment was to help all managers to have some ideas on how best to recruit agents. So, I developed a mailing system known as Action in Recruiting, AIR – AIR, Action in Recruiting – AIR. I got some special mailing papers for writing letters and information for managers on recruiting with AIR at the top. And I sent this out punched with holes in the side, and I sent – I bought binders for each manager with AIR on it, Action in Recruiting. And sent them out with instructions that every month when you get my mailing put it in that loose leaf binder because what I want you to have is a good reference book on recruiting so that you can look in that book and get the ideas you need for various situations and talking with people and trying to convince them to get into the life insurance business and that sort of thing. So, I worked at that for a number of months, in fact, a number of years. And one day I went to lunch with one of my associates in the marketing department there, Wayne Slagle. And at lunchtime Wayne started talking to me about, "You ought to start writing a book, because the material you've prepared through your own research, reading, and everything else, on agent recruiting is some of the best material I've ever seen on that subject. And if you will write a book about it, and use this material for the book you are writing, and get it published, I think you will have some success that you never thought you'd have."

So, the more I thought about that, the more I thought that might be worth listening to. So, my next vacation I took all of my recruiting material from the office home with me to keep for a week, and all that book, everything that was in that book. And I remember spreading it out in a room in our new home out there on Jefferson Road and putting it back together in a different kind of way and trying to figure out how to turn it into a book. And I wrote and worked on that for a number of months. And I mailed it to this publishing company in Indiana where this speaker was coming from every time I had him here for a school. And I had

gotten real well acquainted to him. So, I sent it to his company, to him, for him to take to his old company – he had retired by then – and see if they would be interested in publishing the book. So, I brought a copy of the book, *Action in Recruiting*, which they published. And they sold that stuff to every – their market was all the life insurance companies in the United States and Canada. So, they had a market for this book right away. It went so well and was received so graciously that they shocked me by sending me some royalty checks. And they shocked me further by saying that they wanted me to write a second book *Recruiting: Today's Number One Priority in Agency Management*. And they sent a staff member from Indianapolis down here to talk with me about the contents of this book and what ought to be in it, and how to go about it, and so forth, and so forth. And if you will write it, I'll help edit it, and then we'll get my company to publish it. And this was better than that one, because that one I just written everything in it myself. And this one they had given me an outline as to what's in each chapter, and so forth, and so forth. And also sent me this guy down here to say, "Send your draft to me, and I'll help rework it and so forth." These two books on recruiting, which is one of the toughest jobs in the marketing of life insurance, were so successful in sales to the companies – big companies in the United States and Canada – that I got a lot of special recognition for both of them.

And that special recognition for those two books caused me – I'm sure nobody said this, but I thought about it a lot – caused me to be appointed as a trustee or a director of an organization in Hartford, Connecticut, known as the Life Insurance marketing thing – Agency and Marketing Association. And so, I was named the trustee of that organization for three years. Went there every three or six months for meetings with the staff and got very well acquainted with what they were doing and so forth. And one time toward the end of the third year, they called a special meeting of the trustees in a private room with nobody there except the trustees and a couple of the top staff people. And they gave us all a sheet of paper and a pen and said, "Look, sit down around this long table and look at all the people you know who are trustees seated with you around the table, and I want you to select the name of the person that you would best like to see chairman of this group for the coming year." And I looked the group over, and the staff people left. It was just the trustees that we had the names and so forth. I looked them over, and I selected a guy who was a trustee or director from one of the big mutual companies. And his name and the company name I'm struggling with right now.

But, anyway, I selected his name and wrote it down with his company. And the staff person came back and picked them all up and took them to another room and read them and studied them and categorized them and so forth and brought them back. And they came back and said the top two people. And I'm not telling you which one was the top and which one was second from the top. But I'm telling you the top two people were these two in alphabetical order so you don't know who's one and who's two. But they gave the two names, and they quoted the name of one of those that I listed, and then they quoted Seth Macon.

And I was so shocked I couldn't believe it myself. And so, they came back and passed out another sheet of paper and said, "Write the name of the one you want of these two that you want to be chairman of the trustees or the director for the next year." I wrote the name of the guy I had recommended before, not my name. Because I didn't think I was qualified in the first place. But, anyway, they came back picked up the papers and took them and stayed a while and came back and made the announcement that the new chairman of the trustees would be Seth Macon.

KS: That's impressive! What an honor.

SM: And the old trustee chairman was head of a company in Canada. And we were going to have the banquet for his final term in Toronto, Canada. Hazel and I went there for that meeting. And it was quite an occasion, and they introduced me as the new chairman. And the more I thought about it, the more I realized, and I still believe, that those two books on agent recruiting, which were published in Indianapolis with this insurance review and service, were the reason that I got that recognition. And I struggled with that. But I went there and worked at it hard as I could and got acquainted with everybody and worked with them as well as I possibly could to help them do a better job than they were doing, and to help get new members from Canada and the U.S. as a part of that organization. I had to come up with the right kind of trustees.

KS: Well, I feel so badly. I know I've worn out your voice. I was wondering – but I still have things I would like to talk to you about. Would you mind if I came back another time and finished the interview?

SM: Jiminee, I think you're going to have to, because I haven't gotten very far.

KS: I know! Would that be OK? Would you mind? I'll end –

SM: Yeah.

KS: This is the end of part one of the interview with Seth Macon.

[Recorder turned off]

[End of interview]