

Supreme Court held that the poll tax discriminates against the poor people who couldn't afford to pay the tax. There were families in this area, in fact, the Burr family who live right next to the school over here on Quander Road, who were plaintiffs on the case.

I also handled the case that went to court about the segregated seating law that required blacks and whites to sit in different parts of theatres or auditoriums. We succeeded in getting that held unconstitutional.

I handled most of the litigation that resulted in the Fairfax County Schools being desegregated. It was a little over ten years ago that there was a segregated school system in this county and in 1959 we started the first law suit to bring about desegregation. That was five years after the Supreme Court decided the Brown case. The county hadn't done anything, but we began a process that took several years of litigation and community effort.

I also represented the parents of two black families that brought suit against private schools. It resulted last spring in the Supreme Court decision holding that private schools may not discriminate on the basis of race.

I've been a lawyer about 27 years. I work in labor, civil rights, civil liberties, and also I've been involved in community activities and community life here in northern Virginia. It has been a fact that public facilities (in black neighborhoods) have been neglected ever since the Civil War. Black people lived in one part of town and white people lived in another part. Martin Luther King said one time you could tell where the black part of town was in a southern community, because that is where the pavement stopped. That is really the way the situation has been in Fairfax County. The small black developments that are around the county have existed for many years from the days when the county was rural. Roads in the black communities, places like Gum Springs, have been in rather bad shape and a source of concern for a rather long time.

We brought suit to pave the roads and provide proper drainage in the black communities of the county. In 1972 we obtained an agreement that the county would pave some 75 roads in black communities over a three year period. They reneged on the agreement for a complicated legal reason and we had to go back to court and do some litigating.

We don't find some of the more direct kinds of discrimination that used to be the way we were 15 years ago in northern Virginia. Blacks do not have economic ways of getting into decent housing often times and are reluctant and concerned about hostility that they might receive. Housing is quite a problem for poor people both white and black. I'm sure you're familiar with problems in the high school, problems that people have to deal with every day and have to learn to cope with and try to understand.

## Dove: fireman, mailman

At the old Penn Daw station I was the first paid fireman, and one of the first paid firemen in the area. (Since July 1, 1949). I was a volunteer at the time, and they put up the job, and they called it caretaker. When they changed to county managers form of government in 1952, they made us regular paid firemen.

The fire department had horse shows up there where Beacon Mall shopping center is now. They had horse shows and carnivals and so forth to raise money. When I first went to work at the old Penn Daw fire station, the Beacon Hill airport was still going strong. So was the one at Hybla Valley.

As far as dairy farms are concerned, Hayfield Farm down at Telegraph Road was one. Popkins Farm at the end of Popkins Lane where the Groveton High School started was originally a dairy farm. Mr. Earl Popkins, ran the dairy farm and later sold the ground off.

We used to have trucks on the Number 1 highway, cause 95 hadn't been completed yet. We had a lot of trucks on Snake Hill, and a lot of people were killed there, turning off the highway.

We had a homemade fire engine, and a homemade ambulance and we had an Old Civil Defense piece of equipment that the OCD gave us, a 1942 Chevrolet with a homemade body on it. Then we got two pieces of equipment from army surplus, a 1939 Chevrolet command car that we made an ambulance out of, and a 1936 Indiana.

Most of your wildlife was in Hybla Valley, where they built a big park. I know about 22-25 years ago, a pig truck turned over on the highway. For years they had wild pigs down there.

The young people had a dance at Groveton Elementary for 16 year olds and up. That was the only night life those young people had. The school dance was the only thing around. There was no place else to go. The area which was some 21 sq. miles, there were about 15,000 people in that area.

One of the worst fires I fought was in 1949, when I first went to work. At the corner of East Side Drive, there was two apartment houses that were made from barns, and we had a fire in there, where a lady and three children burnt up. That was probably one of the first fatal fires I ever fought as a paid fireman.

When I first started down here at the Post Office in 1942, I worked at the main office up at Washington and Prince Street. Then they opened up, I think it was 1947 or 1948 the Jefferson Manor Branch, and I was one of the first ones there. That's when we started walking from Jefferson Manor up to Groveton to the top of the big hill, then back down to Jefferson Manor.

Roughly in 21 sq. miles we covered with the Penn Daw fire department company, the population was something like 15,000. We ran fires the same way, no street numbers. "So and so's farm's on fire, second house past the oak tree." Something like that. Mostly using street names and landmarks is the way you ran your fire department.

We used to have all types of accidents on Route 1, cause motorcycles weren't too many back then. In motorcycle accidents generally people were killed. The helmet law wasn't in effect back then and they were nasty accidents, maybe 3 or 4 a year. We did have motorcycle policemen. As a matter of fact we had 2 motorcycle policemen. Groveton substation hadn't been built then.

We had people that rode horses up and down the highway. A man who lived down there, where they built the Ranch House and Lums; Mr. White, who had a jackass, he used to ride up and down the highway. We had the big riding stables down where Bucknell school is now.

We used to have what you called a Monday night clean-up, they'd blow the siren at 6:00 and we had about 45-60 volunteers then, cause there was nothing else to do. They'd all come down and clean up the firehouse and go over the equipment. The other day, I was telling some of the firemen down at the new Penn Daw that each individual crease had a crack and they used to keep the cracks in. The ambulance probably ran every day, fire trucks maybe would sit all week, and that's why we had the Monday night clean-up.

In 1942, I opened a gas station, garage at the old Groveton Texaco. I stayed there about a year, my brother-in-law bought me out and I went back to the post office, that was 1943. There was a Texaco gas station, and in the middle was a barbershop, on the end was what they called the Groveton Luncheonette, then the Groveton Market. It's vacant now but it was Chauncey's Market. Last time it was open it was a carpet shop. We weren't the original owners, it was remodeled in 1942. The trouble was, you couldn't get enough gas to sell to support two people, so we just split up. Not because we couldn't get along with it, but because we couldn't get enough gas to sell. We would have a line of people following the gas trucks. By the time he got his gas pumped, you could sell it within the next hour or so.

## Vozzola: teacher

I was appointed to teach in Groveton Elementary; it wasn't a case of my choosing. They had not completed the building when we came. I taught in a little school over on Telegraph Road. There were a lot of hornets in the wall. Some of the teachers taught down at Mount Vernon Church Building.

Well, I didn't hit the children but often I wanted to hit them. I just can't think of them being abused in that way. Now it was not unheard of to send one into the corner, or to have them write certain things. Due to the bus system, you couldn't keep them after school, which would have been a real punishment.

The depression affected the school system because during that time if you were teaching, and your husband had employment then you were not allowed to teach—one income per family.

Whatever they asked you to do, we had to do it. We had a lot of bus duty. We had to come back and raise money with dances, card parties, or whatever it would be to get certain things we wanted in the school, like books for the library.

I taught the third grade at first, then I went up to the fourth grade. Probably I taught your grandparents.

We were just beginning to work with units. That was a big step in the education system. I can remember all the various things we did. On Christmas, we made paper maché camels. It used to be that you studied so many words for your spelling, so many pages of geography, and so forth. With the unit teaching, you might study selected words related to the unit.

I believe I first started with 90 dollars a month and it increased. In the first years we were not paid during the summer months. We'd have a teachers meeting the day after Labor Day. At that time all of the teachers in the entire county could meet in one building.

I'm retired now and as you know I'm well in my 70's. I do church work and I also work with the Salvation Army. I enjoy reading and I'm always happy if I have a chance to go somewhere. I have difficulty in driving at night due to cataracts.

I taught William Durrer who was the Chief of Police in Fairfax County. I taught Harry Caroco, he's one of the Judges in the Virginia Supreme Court. There has been a great

change in schools but you couldn't begin to get the things then that are offered in schools today. I'm sure there're excellent teachers in all areas now as then.

I think it would be more challenging to teach now because all of you have been exposed to so much more through the years by T.V. and radio.

I did all the things when I was growing up, that you all would think are so corny. We had picnics, lawn games, and skip-to-my-lou-my-darlin'. We square danced. We would go out and gather chestnuts from the trees. When I was old enough, our parents hired a teacher and we would go to her home. Then they had a little slave cabin nearby, that they converted into a one room school. We went there. We had desks where we sat two together.

My father gave two acres of land and they built a one room school. I finished school in the one room school. The first year I boarded in Alexandria High School. The next year my sister and I drove to Fairfax. We parked the horse in a nearby barn and they were very happy to have the horse there because they had a garden and the horse manure was very good. We did not have to pay a fee to leave him there.

I had no children; my children were step children. But my granddaughter graduated from Virginia Polytechnical Institute this year and we often laugh about when I was in school.

## Hudson: policeman

Captain Hudson, Commander of the Groveton District Station, was a senior at Mt. Vernon High School when he dropped out with four months left. He went into the paratroopers, spending 27 months in Japan and Korea. After his discharge he went back and finished high school. He tried his hand in construction work for 2½ years before deciding to join the Fairfax County Police Department primarily because of a need for financial security.

When asked about similarities between today's youth and the youth when he first joined the force, he said, "The most similar crime of the youth of today and when I first joined the force is vandalism and burglaries. Kids have always done it and the worst part is it can't be predicted."

The major difference between the youth when he joined the force and today's youth is drugs and alcohol. If a minor is found in possession of drugs, he or she will be prosecuted. He knows if someone wants to smoke marijuana or drink alcohol they'll do it. They will find a way to obtain it.

When asked if he personally favors the legalization of marijuana, he said, "I don't believe there've been enough studies conducted. Some so-called experts on the subject of marijuana who once advocated removing penalties for its possession and use have since changed their position." He thinks that alcohol and cigarettes are dangerous. He does smoke and drink some.

Does he resent people who dislike him for his authority? He doesn't resent these people and when asked about being called a "pig," he said he doesn't mind—he's been called worse. He also says that the Groveton substation probably has the highest arrest record in the county. Most arrests come from the Route 1 corridor, the arrests being drunk driving and drunk in public related incidents such as fighting due to the number of bars on Route 1.

## Trice: state trooper

I was a state trooper on criminal law. I've worked on a lot of them murders. Mostly we had investigators for that but it was part of our work to enforce all criminal laws. We had jurisdiction everywhere except government property.

When I went to work you couldn't hardly buy a job. The depression was around 1931, 32, 33. They (the State Police) were going to hire a few new ones. That's when I applied. I was married then, too, I needed a job.

Wasn't but about 40,000 people I think at that time in Fairfax County. Very few stores very few filling stations, nothin' but woods. Hybla Valley Stores—all those was an airport. A good friend of mine was running it to teach pilots. Then there was one up here where Beacon Mall is. The Dixie Pig was just a small building, just a sandwich place. In later years, a friend of mine bought that and it's been enlarged. Everything's been enlarged on Route 1. These buildings around here, wasn't a thing here when I came up here in 1935. This nice old lady, Miss Quander, —she knows.

They were waterducks. If anybody drowned, we'd call in the Arnold boys. I know one night, back in '39, I got a call that a car had gone off old Route 1 into Hunting Creek. I hurried on down there, caught a fella walkin up the bank I said, "Is anybody else down there?" and he says, "Yes, there's four more down there." He rolled the window down and got on top of the car and then he came on to the bank. The Arnold boys, that's when they came. This was in the evening. I call it supper time. They couldn't do nothin through the night but I think they found the rest of em, a couple in the car.

I just enjoy people. I've been dealing with them all my life. We were very active in Citizens meetings at that time. I know at Groveton we bought street signs. We had 'em made and paid for 'em and they were selling them through the Citizen Meetings Association.

This whole thing is changed—Up there where I live on Collard Street—that was all a field. We've been here a long time.

## Proffit: builder

We do asphalt paving and small jobs. Generally, we do driveways and tennis courts. There were always some dairy farms that had gone to subdivisions. At the old Groveton school, from the east side of the highway, there had been a dairy farm. That one was prior to my time. It was already a little subdivision.

My father was a construction worker and was in the excavating business for himself. He ran what they used to call a steam shovel. Actually, it is gasoline powered. He helped widen Route 1 to a three lane road and then a four. He built Coventry Road and part of Ross Street, and also, other roads in the area.

When we were little, we used to pick blackberries. Right where Bucknell Heights is, was an area that had been cleared for a cow pasture. We used to call that the first stump field. Then, where White Oaks is, that was the second stump field. When we really got far away from home, over where Hollin Hills is, an open area in there was the third stump field for blackberry picking. That was really traveling a long ways then.

This house and the one next door are sitting on the site of an anti-aircraft barrier, one of those guns that they used during World War II. In fact, I found a 50 caliber shell in my garden. They had four fifty caliber machine guns. They were mounted on a track that was turned to shoot practice rounds. I remember they had an anti-aircraft cannon. I don't know the caliber, size or whatever, but it was right in my back yard.

They had one barrack built. You've seen Army barracks, but this was just one. There was nothing to do. We had the whole place covered with little paths and the edges lined with rocks. They would have them out there painting the rocks white or red just to keep them busy.

The land where the old Groveton High School was, was a gravel pit on Mr. Burt Ayres land. Right where it stands, Mr. Earl Popkins used to have a thrashing machine. They didn't have combines like they do now. You used to have to cut it and shuck it. In the fields, there used to be little stacks of cut wheat and we'd load those old wagons and take it to the thrashing machine. There was a summer where I'd helped him on the thrashing machine. I helped shuck wheat in the field before the gravel pit was dug down to it's twenty or thirty foot level. The school was then built in the bottom of that pit. There was another gravel pit across the street where the Telephone Company building now stands.

There used to be one other central point in the community. There was a huge riding stable. They had enough stables in one barn to hold a hundred horses. Right where Bucknell Elementary School is, there was an old horse graveyard. They used to bury horses that got sick or died of old age. They also used to have horse shows over there. They used to also hold horse shows up on Beacon Field. Horses became very popular during the War because of the gasoline shortage. Everybody around here owned one. Many of them even in their garages.

## Devers: motel and restaurant owner

We bought the property on Richmond Highway in 1937.

In the early forties we built a restaurant onto our house which was at 6737 Richmond Highway. We served some family meals and took care of a lot of the personnel at Fort Belvoir. Our specialty, which was almost unknown at the time, was to have chicken and seafood boxes to carry-out. My husband conceived this idea from someone he knew in Washington, D.C. The motel (Devers) was built in 1952. It was a separate structure of brick behind the white house. The name of the restaurant was The Open Kitchen.

I worked for National Permanent Savings and Loan in Washington for a good many years and I was working when we still had our restaurant. We only opened it in the evenings. My husband was the chief steward for the Department of Corrections and he would always be home in time to open it and when I came home, I would help, too. We were rather busy people. We would open Saturdays and Sundays.

I flew from Beacon Airport, at times, with Franklin Reid and some of the fliers. One time I was taking some people down to look at a room in the motel and we were walking back and here was an airplane coming right across Number 1 highway and they looked at me and said, "Does this happen all the time?"

I very calmly replied, "No, not all the time."

Once in a while one would hit. There was a high transformation wire below us before houses were built on Schooley Drive (which was originally Marshall Street) and on occasion someone flying low would hit one of those wires. They hit that high wire one time but did not cause any fire to any resident. It just caught on fire at the end of the wire, and the plane went off and there was fire going from it. One plane came down and landed luckily between the garage and a tree, but it didn't cause any fire.

Most of the flying from this area was done from Beacon Airport. Beacon Airport trained a lot of the navy fliers. We had people stay in the motel that flew in the Beacon Airport. Arthur Godfrey was flying over there when we first moved here. People told me that was where he learned to fly.

I recall an air spotting station on Collard Street years ago during the Second World War that was built from donation of the residents. When I came home from the office, I would take my two hour stand and Monday nights, my husband and Mr. Wilson; Pierce Reid and Herbert Blount—the four of them would man it for several hours in the night. The ladies would watch during the daytime. We received certificates for manning the station. We did it over a long period, more than a year. Then we had black-outs, and we all had to take part in that. If any plane was suspicious, we had a number to call and it was very seldom that it was used. I don't remember anyone spotting a plane.

I've retired now. I don't say entirely, because we have some business to take care of. I was a registrar well over thirty years. About seven or eight years ago, I gave it up. I'm still an election official. The only voting place we had was a small community house on Telegraph Road. That took care of everyone in the area—all around from this side of Franconia up to Hybla Valley. Then we moved to the Penn Daw Fire House which used to be on Richmond Highway down where the carpet place is now. That is where we had voting for a good many years. Then they split us again and the east side became Bucknell and Fairhaven and Jefferson Manor. All those places became heavily populated and they had to split it up into precincts.

## Cas Neer: architect

I first became interested in Hollin Hills about 1950, shortly after I moved here to the metropolitan area. I worked for one firm in the District and a friend went to work for Charles Goodman who was the architect for the new community. Since the community was just being planned he let me in on the ground floor on what was happening, and being an architect I was particularly interested. To my knowledge, it was the first modern community that was planned for a speculative developer. I had just moved down here from Boston and there were two or three communities in Boston which had been planned communities, all modern, however they were designed individually for each family, whereas this was a "track built development."

Using the same principles of a planned community, but planned particularly in the sense of getting the maximum natural use of the site involved, Hollin Hills is a very hilly rolling sight, and the idea was to maintain as much of the natural vegetation, the natural charm of the wooded area, and utilize the valleys and the contours of the land in the most efficient way. It resulted in a number of cul-de-sacs around which groups of houses were built, which provided considerable privacy. Nevertheless it does

a great deal more for the land and the preserving of trees and natural streams. It also provided natural drainage areas from the slopes to go into streams which were then developed into little park areas that were open community property.

One of the manifestations of modern architecture was the discovery of how glass could amplify the sense of space, particularly since the houses were relatively small. With as much natural vegetation being preserved, there was something to look out on when you had all of this glass.

One of the main purposes of the design was that this was not tightly designed individual lots separated by fences, but was to have a sense of community where one space flowed into the other. By in large it has been very successful although there had been some areas where people jealously guarded their privacy by the erection of fences. The groups of shrubbery suggested boundaries to some degree, so one got a sense of ownership without a hard line of demarcation, therefore contributing to the sense of total community.

I would say basically they function well, or they wouldn't have sold as well as they did. There's nothing particularly unusual about the function of the houses other than perhaps the extreme amount of glass by comparison to other standards. The glass would tend, in the wrong orientation, to make some bedrooms cold and less desirable and therefore disturb the function to some degree. Most every area had the advantage of considerable solar gain and the delight of sunlight coming within the house not only reduced the heating bill, but also created communal areas, and the families tended to congregate in them. In that sense I think it has a particularly good function.

As to their adaptation to new forms of heat or new forms of energy—all that's rather difficult to say. In regard to solar heat which is probably the prominent variation energy consideration today, the most effective slope of a roof to get the maximum benefit from solar radiation is considerably steeper than most of the Hollin Hills houses, so that you begin to have a very great architectural effect upon the present buildings. So it becomes an individual architectural decision if solar heat is added.

Already available on the market are separate solar heating units that can be placed strategically anywhere near the house unrelated to the buildings themselves. So this is one possibility of adding solar energy to the buildings without having to change the architecture of them.

I have lived in three Hollin Hills houses and have found all of them had very reasonable heating bills by comparison with what friends of mine had who lived in traditional houses.

I started my architectural practice starting Hollin Hills additions in one form or the other. Some additions were easier to handle architecturally than others. The general intent of the community is to respect the character and aesthetics of the basic design which was originated as part of the overall project. These houses were started in the 50's and the aesthetics of Hollin Hills is a 1950 aesthetics. We are well into the 70's and architectural attitudes and aesthetic attitudes have changed considerably within that 20 year period. Most of the additions you are seeing today have a much more 70's look, whatever that means! There is less glass, less concern with functional requirement and more variety of architectural expression. There still is the usual requirement that all additions receive approval by the architectural reviewing committee that has been maintained from the beginning of Hollin Hills.

My particular vintage sort of was related to the modern movement of architecture. I was excited about the very features that Hollin Hills provided not only social, as a planned community, but its adaptation to natural surroundings, its use of glass, enjoyment of nature, and the introduction of sunlight. Having lived in this kind of environment as well as in traditional houses, I have found it highly satisfactory. I think it is superior to surrounding communities, certainly the Bucknells and some that were much more concerned with profits.

The lightness of support members within the large areas of glass of Hollin Hills has been heavily criticized by the more traditional because of the feeling of flimziness. This was a purposeful objective of the 50's, to take everything down to its lightness and still be structurally effective, to have a minimum of massive wall. A traditional house was basically a mass with holes punched in it.

Planned community is a sort of catch all term and there have been planned communities before so it's not a new thing. It just happened to be one of the first. My opinion of why Hollin Hills was significant is that it was built by people who were presumably out to make a fast buck and utilize the latest principles of good sound planning in terms of human and natural resources and trying to get the most out of the land for the land and for the people.

I would also point that the very same principles employed in Hollin Hills back in the 40's and 50's are the basic principles that were used in the planned communities in Reston and Columbia, two of the very earliest basic complete towns that were an expansion of the very same principles of the Hollin Hills plan.

A Frank Lloyd Wright house is not a particular type however, he is perhaps most well known by the houses he has done in Wisconsin and Illinois. One of the things they seem to have in common were great overhangs partly because they were in the prairie country of the U.S. and there was not always vegetation to give relief from the sun.

The Hollin Hills standard pitch (roof) had a reasonable overhang but they did not have the great sheltering feeling of his (Wright's) earlier houses. Some of the models, one of which I lived in, in Hollin Hills, with absolutely no overhang was a glass box, a sort of eloquent little abstract piece of space, but it gave absolutely no shelter. If you didn't have a good roof drain, the roof filled up and poured over the sides of the glass and you would get all kinds of leaks through the openings of the glass, plus your windows would become a waterfall and a lot of times you would find ice all over the windows of Hollin Hills.

# Traditions



*Bert Ayres, the Knight of Groveton*

## Bennett and Sherwood

MR. BENNETT: You know the little white building on Popkins Lane? That was a Fairfax County school house years ago. Her father went there.

MRS. BENNETT: He only went there one year.

MR. BENNETT: It was a Fairfax County School is what I'm trying to bring out.

MRS. BENNETT: He donated the land.

MR. BENNETT: It belongs to St. Louis Church now.

MRS. BENNETT: It used to be little St. Louis Church before we built the big one.

My father bought 43 acres from a J. C. Collard, December 9, 1909. It was called Groveton Farms. At that time there was a Clifton Road in the deed, so it must have been Clifton Road that it was on.

MR. BENNETT: That's where Popkins Lane is. I can't remember why they named it Popkins Lane.

MRS. SHERWOOD: It was supposed to be Popkins-Ayres Drive. There was two Popkins' and one Ayres so they just made it Popkins.

MRS. BENNETT: I was born there, she was born there, and another brother was born there. Then a new house was built there in 1921. Then my father sold the place

because he was paralyzed. To whom, I can not think of now but I think it was a real estate man. Then St. Louis Church bought it from them. Then Groveton High School bought a part of it. My mother had one section up there that she lived in.

Where the old Groveton football field is used to be my father's gravel pit.

MR. BENNETT: They took gravel out when they was building the road to Fort Belvoir.

MRS. SHERWOOD: All the gravel came out of our place and Cranford and Sons built the highway.

MR. BENNETT: A lot of the gravel came out of there went for National Airport. They took thousands and thousands of loads to cover that place.

MRS. SHERWOOD: Yeah, that was later on. He had to go out of the milk business because of it.

Fort Belvoir was Camp Humphreys during World War I. They took the gravel out of our place because they came down and they tested it all around and we had the best gravel. While that road was being built, they built another camp down the hill from us across from Cherry Arms apartments. That was called Camp Lonesome during World War I. They tore that down right after the war was over.

MRS. BENNETT: Where Cherry Arms is was my father's land too. It went right down to Nightingale's. They had a night club there.

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Nightingale bought that piece of land and put the club there.

MRS. SHERWOOD: That was the first club in this area.

MR. BENNETT: They had a beautiful dance floor.

MRS. SHERWOOD: They sure did.

MRS. BENNETT: They had bands, and a dance floor, eating.

MR. BENNETT: We were courting in those days.

MRS. SHERWOOD: That was the music of the 1920's.

MR. BENNETT: Watch it, watch it. We didn't get married 'till '36.

MRS. BENNETT: I was only sixteen then.

MR. BENNETT: Thirties, music of the thirties.

MRS. BENNETT: His great grandfather, Jeremiah Reagan, bought this land right here, clear down to Spring Bank and clear down to Quander Road in the 1850's and it was called Johnson Hill. He came from Ireland.

MR. BENNETT: At least six generations branch out from this piece of land. That's six generations on this property.

MRS. BENNETT: He's buried at St. Mary's Church. He was born in 1809 and died in 1890. That was my husband's great, great grandfather.

They'd have what they called lawn parties in the daytime and they'd last up until night. Then they'd have the dancing and to-do at night time for whoever won the tournaments.

MRS. SHERWOOD: Up here at Pierce-Reid they used to have it.

MRS. BENNETT: I was crowned at Franconia. The tournaments were so much fun.

They'd have big lights strung sort of like Japanese lanterns. They used to have these paper cups, like bowls, and you'd get two dips of ice cream and a piece of homemade cake for a nickel. And people would make crocheted things and lace things. And a spinning wheel contest to see who could spin the fastest. They'd have different games like that.

Then during the day they'd have this tournament. It's really hard. My father was very good at it. You'd have to get on the horse a certain way, running, and hold it (the rod) so you could get them (the rings) on it. It was a long rod and it had a point on it. The rings started out big, and gradually came down to just enough to fit onto the end. Whoever won, out of so many tries, crowned the queen that night.

It was really tricky. My mother and father had one back at the grapevine in the back and Bert used to practice and practice.

MRS. SHERWOOD: His horse was Starlight. It was all bay except one white spot on his forehead looked like a star.

QUESTION: Did he win a lot of the tournaments?

MRS. SHERWOOD: Yes, between him and an uncle of ours, Jack Ayres. He lived down by Gum Springs.

QUESTION: Were they both the "Knights of Groveton," or just your father?

MRS. SHERWOOD: Just my father.

MRS. BENNETT: When the church gave the lawn party where me and Lawrence had our picture taken, was that given by the Catholic church?

MRS. SHERWOOD: That was given by the Catholic church because the Presbyterian church was giving one the same night and Father Schmidt came down and wanted to know had we had our tickets printed. We told him, "No," and he said, "Well, we've already got our tickets printed, so let us have it and you all have it the following week. Otherwise neither one of us will make anything, and we'll help you out." So we all went over there that night and when the Presbyterian church gave their lawn party we had more Catholics there than we had Presbyterians. We made over \$500.

There was no activities down here except the church, and Sunday school, and get together at people's homes. Now the Weiss' had quite a family of children, so on Friday and Saturday nights they'd give what we called a taffy party. This was when you'd pull taffy until it got hard and you'd eat that. Then she'd serve cookies and some sort of punch that she'd make. Anybody that had long hair, they'd be pulling taffy and boy, before you'd know it, they'd have it all around their head.

MRS. BENNETT: And then we had watermelons, too. And you'd finish eating the watermelon and the boys would wash your face with the watermelon rind.

MRS. SHERWOOD: That's if they could catch you.

The tournaments was only twice a year on 4th of July, and Labor Day, because they were the only holidays the farmers would take off.

MRS. BENNETT: They got rid of the horses you see, and it is a shame. Lots of the bad winters my father used to have to take the wheels off an old wagon and load his milk into it, put the horses to it and bring it across to where old Groveton High School

is now, out to the highway so he could put it on the truck and get it to town. The snow was that deep. And they thought we had such an awful winter this year. Then the sleighs, too, with the horses was fun.

We used to have hayrides too, by golly, we forgot! Used to take a wagon and load it with hay and the horses pull it. A whole bunch of kids would get on and sing and just ride and ride.

MRS. SHERWOOD: It used to go down to Kirk Wilkinson's house and he'd have a bonfire built and there you'd toast marshmallows and have hot dogs on sticks. You didn't have bread with it, you just had hotdogs. Used to have sleighing parties too, when the snow was high. And sleigh ride over by Popkins Hill there, you could sleigh down right to Kirk Wilkinson's house and he'd have a bonfire for you.

MRS. BENNETT: We had wood stoves, that's what my mother cooked on. We had a wood stove in the living room and the sitting room. Then we had a huge fireplace. It was the length of the room, for the dining room. Upstairs we had no heat. It was cold. I used to make my bed before I got out of it.

MR. BENNETT: Ghost stories!

MRS. BENNETT: My mother's place you know, during the Civil War they had a fort and the soldiers came and took over the house, with the kids there.

MRS. SHERWOOD: That was all Hardbowers Hill.

MRS. BENNETT: The soldiers came in and took over the house.

MRS. SHERWOOD: That headless horse rode this strip of road here.

MRS. BENNETT: I thought it was over at Mt. Comfort, down through that dip. This old colored man that lived over there said that that horse went by him and you could see the horse but he had no head. You couldn't get him to come out of that house at nighttime to come across that field unless it was death. He would not 'cause he'd see that horse. It was white and it had no head.

MRS. BENNETT: Well, I thought going down in that dip to Mt. Comfort cemetery. There was a headless man they said.

MRS. SHERWOOD: Headless man, yeah, but this was a headless horse.

The children of today don't have the fun that we had even though we had nothing. We didn't know what it was to discriminate. We had blacks working for us that lived on the farm. After our day's work was done and supper was eaten we'd get out and play high-over. We'd get three or four on each side of the house and see who could throw a ball and who could catch it and bring it around to the other side. We'd play high-over or we'd play hide-and-go-seek.

MRS. BENNETT: Kick the can.

MRS. SHERWOOD: Or we'd have jumping rope or we'd play ball.

MRS. BENNETT: And that's the way we entertained ourselves and we didn't know what it was to get bored.

MRS. BENNETT: We rode horses too.

MRS. SHERWOOD: We rode horses and we disobeyed like children of today.

MRS. BENNETT: You might have.

MRS. SHERWOOD: Now after the horses had worked all day and they were fed, we had to take them down to the lower field and leave them to graze. We were not supposed to ride those horses down. We were supposed to get behind them and shoo 'em on down. We'd get on those horses and ride them down and see who could jump the branch.

MRS. BENNETT: One of the things the kids miss nowadays is not coming up on a farm and learning how to milk a cow. The children nowadays aren't brought up on a farm like we were and they don't have the work to do from morning to night. Then you was so tired you didn't have time to get in trouble. In the olden times by the time we finished our work and everything Mama had chickens we had to feed, we had to help her.

MR. BENNETT: There was conversation then, reading. There wasn't any T.V. You had a victrola.

MRS. SHERWOOD: Or you had a player piano. And you played dominoes or checkers. You can't compare it. There wasn't any automobiles that the kids could use.

MR. BENNETT: Horse and buggy.

MRS. SHERWOOD: Sometimes the children would take a horse and go out 'cause I know my brother took a horse and the horse threw him and stepped on his leg. He didn't tell my parents 'cause he knew he was gonna get in trouble if he did. But my mother found out. They still did things then that they weren't supposed to do. We were forbidden to get up on the barns and things, but when we played hide-and-go-seek we'd get up on top of the barn and hide. I often think back if you slipped and fell where would you be now.

MR. BENNETT: Only time you got in trouble was on Saturday night. Only time you went to town was on Saturday night. You worked all week and on Saturday night you quit early around 1 or 2 o'clock.

MRS. SHERWOOD: Not on our farm you didn't. You quit at 3 or 4 o'clock.

MR. BENNETT: You go down to town on Saturday night and everybody'd gather on King Street.

MRS. SHERWOOD: You'd get into Alexandria and if you had a girl friend, you'd get in around a quarter to nine. Our father'd say, "OK, you can go to the movies, but be back here at 9:30." Who in the dickens could go to the movies?

MR. BENNETT: Give you a quarter and say bring me the 15¢ change.

MRS. SHERWOOD: That's right.

MR. BENNETT: See there wasn't any bus line here. They used to have a street car went from Washington down to New Alexandria. Say I wanted to come from up here to see my grandmother Regan, (we's living in Washington) we'd have to get off at New Alexandria and we'd have to walk all the way up to the farm. Weren't any buses.

MRS. BENNETT: Well, I rode with Daddy on the milk truck because he delivered milk in Alexandria and served door to door, you see, retail.

MRS. SHERWOOD: We went in on the milk truck, my brother and sister and I, and we'd get in to St. Mary's Academy at 7:30 in the morning and we had to wait

'till they had breakfast and then started school. Then we'd have to walk home from Alexandria which was 4½ miles right from St. Mary's Academy on Prince Street to our door. We walked rain or shine, hail or blow.

MR. BENNETT: Didn't wear shoes either, had to take your shoes off. Didn't want them shoes walkin' back and forth to school.

MRS. BENNETT: I didn't walk, buses was running when I went.

MRS. SHERWOOD: Buses, right. But Daddy didn't let us ride the buses, my dear girl. He wouldn't let us ride the bus. He said, "God made our feet."

MR. BENNETT: Were you allowed to wear your shoes in between? Used to have to carry your shoes over your shoulder so you wouldn't ruin them.

MRS. SHERWOOD: Summertime we didn't have shoes. My mother said you didn't need shoes to work out in the field.

But I still say that the children of today have missed a lot. That's the reason when they grow up and they have to go to work they're bored with life.

## Dodson

When we first moved out here, Beacon Hill Airport used to be the favorite play area for young kids. I happened to get a flight with Arthur Godfrey when he used to fly out of there for Good Gulf Gasoline. He worked for radio station WJSV which is no longer in existence, I guess.

The second war, the Navy took it over and used it as a training field. In the early forties they used to have parachute jumps on the Sunday afternoons and that was a big attraction. We used to have airshows here and Betty Shelton, one of the famous women flyers, used to do barnstorming around here. On Sunday afternoon it was either watch the guy jump out of the airplane or watch one of the local ball teams play ball up behind the Sunlight Inn. That was up where the Dixie Pig is today.

As a matter of fact in the Groveton area about the only thing you really had to do was take a good walk. There were many sandlot ball teams around here in the area, quite a few adult hardball teams, which is something that's a thing of the past now. One of the biggest fields used to be up at Dan Reagan's who was the owner of the Sunlight Inn up there behind the Pig. That was another big weekend attraction, ball playing up there.

I guess one of the most forgotten things about this area was the dirt race track that was down at Hybla Valley in the later 40's and early 50's. There was a ¼ mile dirt track down there and it took off real big there for a while and they had some well-known drivers come in and drive. The fire department even had a Demolition Derby down there for fund raising. I think everybody, every youngster that drove a car at one time or another went down there and ran on the dirt track. At that time there was no other racing around other than what the kids used to do in the street.

Uncle Bill Viar was a gentleman who lived at Groveton, everyone called him Uncle. He had the Viarwood Riding Academy. Just about everybody who didn't have their

own horse went up there to ride. There used to be quite a few horse shows in the area. As the population increased around here the horses sort of died off due to the restrictions.

When I was growing up, of course the colored went to their own school and we went to ours. We had sandlot football and baseball teams and we used to play the boys that lived over on Quander Road and the ones over at Gum Springs and we never had a problem. When I was a kid, and delivering papers, I used to deliver to Mr. Quander that lived over on Quander Road, and he was a very nice, well-respected gentleman in the neighborhood. I guess Quander Road and Gum Springs are about the two oldest Negro settlements in the area.

## Barnes

I first came here in 1939 and started in '40 to build my house on what is known today as Memorial Street. It was East Oak in those days and it was a gravel street. All streets was gravel except Number 1 highway and Beacon Hill Road past the Dixie Pig. At that time when you come down Number 1 highway when you got over three blocks off of Route 1 that was the end of town.

During the Civil War when the soldiers came home, they brought to the area the sport of baseball. Before that time when people got together for entertainment, the men would go in the woods and they would fight. They would wrestle and box. They would have a big picnic where everybody got all they could eat and drink. Then the men would go down in the woods and fight, and the women would set around and talk quilting.

The first real sport to draw attention to this area was what is known as jousting, tournament riding. That's like the knight's rode with the lance and picked the rings up. Mrs. Popkins, her husband and her brother-in-law were big tournament riders. They rode under the name of the Knights of Clifton. That was the name of the farm. A man named Burt Ayres rode as the Knight of Groveton. In the process of riding tournament the man that wins gets a wreath to crown his Queen with, that's the prize he gets. Then they have a big dance and a big ball. He crowns his lady fair.

The next sport that came along to take any size crowd, was baseball. Every community and town in the United States always had what was known as a sandlot baseball team. When I moved to Groveton in '39, up where the Dixie Pig is now, there was a baseball diamond. They would play there on Sunday afternoon, and we'd go in the Dixie Pig and set. They came around and stick their hats in the window to get the collection to help pay for the balls. They would challenge other communities. They paid some of the guys, but most was just amateur. A lot of them would be broken down professional ball players who couldn't make it in the big league.

Then the baseball went out when the war came on, and everybody went horse happy in this country. Everybody that had a yard big enough to put a horse in, they bought a horse. We used to put on horse shows. Our first show was on the 7th day of November in 1943, a Sunday.

The largest crowd that was ever in Groveton was a motorcycle race. Mr. Reid gave them permission to build a race track. They came there and worked about a week with

a grader and make an 8th of a mile track. They advertised to have a motorcycle race. The people came on a Saturday. It rained so hard that they couldn't have the race because the track was a dirt track. We estimated that there was 5,000 people. The cars was around that track and they was just like a parking lot. They even went across the street. They just closed everything up in Groveton. They came from New Jersey, even as far as Florida, to come to that race. Afterwards business people along Route 1 went to the Board of Supervisors and outlawed the motorcycle races.

We used to ride down here in the woods on Sundays. People down here played what they called gambling dominos. You know, the crap game. And then they did have cock fights, but they didn't draw very big crowds because the law would get them. That's since I've lived here. Back in the days before the civil war that was a great sport in this area. Up until the Humane Society outlawed it.

## Arnold: Streetcar Pranks

MR. ARNOLD: Us kids, we'd put our money together and we didn't want to pay carfare and spend that money (7¢ per ticket). So we'd stop the conductor, they were real nice, and they knew what we were doing. We'd just say, "What time is the next car comin' by," or somethin' like that. And on the back there they had this big, somethin' like a cow catcher. It was a big cup that the other cars hooked on to. While we were talkin' one of the guys would get on the back of that and sit in it. Ride all the way to town.

MRS. ARNOLD: Free ride or a free lunch!

MR. ARNOLD: When we was goin' to school there was so durn many of us in our family, nine boys and seven girls, and we was goin' to a city school and had to pay. You lived in the county and ya couldn't go up there unless you paid, and then payin' the car fare too.

My father used to have to buy these books of tickets. And each one of us had one to last us say a week. And anyway to make money, the seats would fold over like this (in an upside down V) and we'd get on that car real fast and push the seats over and two or three of 'em would get down under it.

We wouldn't let the conductor see who was in there. We'd stand all around him and give him the ticket! And that was the money we could spend that day for that ticket. We'd sell it to somebody and spend the money for candy.

When I was a kid down here at night time all the boys would go up there in that station. It was just an open station, corrugated metal and benches all the way around it. The station was right at the corner of Potomac Avenue and Belle Haven Road. And that's where all the trouble started.

MRS. ARNOLD: How 'bout puttin' that money on the tracks?

MR. ARNOLD: Oh yes!

MRS. ARNOLD: Greasin' the tracks!

MR. ARNOLD: Yeah, there was a man that worked for the Potomac Yards, a southern railroad. His name was Clark and he lived in that Flattops. He used to get us those torpedos you'd put on the track. It was like a bomb they put on the track. And they put 'em on the railroads in those days for an emergency, ya know. But down here we just put 'em out for the hell of it, to scare people.

Used to grease the tracks too. We could see the street car comin' and we used to get these buckets of grease from this old man, Mr. Clark, and we'd grease that track for as far as you could see. And here it'd come, hell bustin', get to this station and slap on those brakes, and just keep on goin'! That was the only thing we had to do in those days down here.

Then there was those sassafras trees that always grew along the railroad track. They'd have the men come down a certain time of year and they'd cut 'em. And they didn't get any higher than three feet, but burn, boy those things would really burn! At night time we'd get a big pile of 'em, all us boys, and put 'em right in the middle of the track. And we'd see that train comin' across and we'd set it on fire. My father used to, oh boy, he used to . . .

## Parkway fights

There was no boulevard at all at that time. I call it the boulevard, it's the Parkway. They didn't put it in here 'till about thirty-five, somewhere along in there. That's how come we moved. See, our house was right where the picnic area is now. You come down Belle Haven Road, and cross the park and go all the way over into the picnic area. Our house was right on the waterfront there.

MRS. ARNOLD: Tell 'em about the fight you had down there. Wasn't it your mother got in the concrete?

MR. ARNOLD: Yeah, they were buildin' the boulevard right in front of my house. They were layin' the concrete, this way from Mt. Vernon. They did it in patches really. And they were right in front of our house pourin' this concrete and my brothers worked for the company that was buildin' the highway. It was three or four of my brothers that were workin' for 'em. The people that were buildin' it were contractors from North Carolina. They had the bid on it and all these men from North Carolina were up here. And anyway somehow or another one of my brothers got in a fight with one of 'em. They beat him up and he come told my other brothers and the four of 'em got together.

They went down, got in a big fight and beat these guys up. Anyway, my father was real hotheaded and he came home. He was an old man at that time. So he came home, got his gun and he was gonna do 'em all in. So all down the lane right across this wet concrete, my father ran across it, and all us kids ran across it, and my mother ran across it tryin' to catch my father and she fainted! Right smack dab in the concrete. I'll never forget that. Got her up and somebody carried her home, but by that time he'd gone, he'd gone.

The county police came down there and told everyone they'd better cut it out, but they didn't arrest anybody.

That night these guys here from North Carolina and South Carolina knew what they'd gotten into so they decided to go on back home. You know where Ft. Hunt Road bisects No. 1 Highway, well they were all down at that gas station gassin' up to go back home. Man, that's where the fight started. That's when they all got locked up. Tore the man's gas station up. Father had to pay for all the damages. Had to go up to the jail, Fairfax jail the next mornin' and get 'em all out!

# Dripping Springs

Where the library is and then that hillside where you start comin' down, well Dripping Spring used to be along there. I remember Easter Monday when we was out of school and nobody went to work that day. That was a real big day. We'd all get in the wagon and they'd bake cakes and everything. Big Easter baskets and all. We'd go up in Dripping Springs, play games, have a good time and make a day of it.

MRS. ARNOLD: Even when he came back from overseas we went up there.

MR. ARNOLD: Yeah, we still did. Loads of people'd come from Alexandria did the same thing. They'd walk down here. A lot of Boy Scouts used to camp out there. The scouts had built a swimming pool up there. They dammed a little creek up. Had this long rope, you'd get on one side, swing over and drop into the pond.

MRS. ARNOLD: Tarzan and Jane.

# Bootlegging

Mr. Bob Arnold was a known bootlegger in the Groveton area throughout the 1920's in New Alexandria. His son, Pat Arnold, made the well-remembered corn whiskey recipe available.

The first necessary ingredients are corn meal and 50 pounds of sugar and water. These are combined in two twenty gallon barrels along with a large yeast cake which makes the heat for the fermentation process. The mixture is left in the barrels for about eight days and near the end of these days Mr. Arnold said, "You can see bubbles coming to the top of the barrels and bursting." When the bubbles burst, the sediment goes to the bottom of the barrels and then this is bucketed out for further processing. The fermented corn meal is then put in the still where it is heated. The steam goes up through the copper coils where it cools and the process ends by letting the sediment run through to a bucket of water. As Mr. Arnold finished explaining the procedure he said, "That's where the alcohol is—in the bucket at the end."

This recipe for corn whiskey is about 140 proof and makes about fifteen gallons. For really good whiskey though, the process did not stop here, but the alcohol was transferred into charcoal barrels and stored. This gave the whiskey a hearty charcoal flavor. "Course you had to leave it in there a year or two," conveyed Pat Arnold.

If one were eager to find a large whiskey supply in the 20's, the place to go would have been the Arnold's rose arbor. According to Mr. Arnold it was filled with barrels. He said, "We'd dig up the ground in the arbor and put the barrels in the ground and cover 'em up with dirt. Leave 'em in there six or so months and then bring them out for Christmas."

Among the most regular customers of the Arnold's business were the prominent people from Alexandria. In the 20's a ½ gallon of good whiskey, "which ours was," Mr. Arnold said assuringly, costs maybe two or three dollars.

To some, the business might sound fairly easy and most profitable, but things did not always run smoothly. The revenuers were not a big problem, but they did make a show of face now and then. When this problem arose, the Arnolds were first to know about it because for access to the known areas of alcohol preparation, the Arnold's Daddy's boat was always needed. While the revenuers were out paddling in the boat,

the Arnolds were up on their house roof shooting off the gun and waving the sheet as warning about the oncoming, uninvited visitors. It sounded as if the revenuers were fighting a losing battle.

With the creation of the 18th Amendment though, the bootlegging business for the Arnolds and many others culminated. People found it easier to buy their liquor from the government. Bootlegging wasn't a very profitable activity after this time, but Mr. Arnold assured us, "Course many had stills in those days but they would never tell ya."

# Arnold

I was telling you about bootleg, my father used to bootleg. Well see this bottle says Fairfax and Company. Well, this was a whiskey bottle you used to be able to go in the store and buy, years back.

MRS. ARNOLD: There were no ABC stores.

MR. ARNOLD: We didn't make that much.

MRS. ARNOLD: He didn't have his name on his bottle!

MR. ARNOLD: Here's one that has a street address, now I used to hear my parents talk about these people. J. J. Kelly, corner of King and West St.

There was a lot of bootlegging. Used to be about 25 houses down here and I can only think of about three people, and they worked for the government, if they'd been caught drinkin' or makin' it they'd of lost their jobs.

It was just a normal thing to do in those days. You'd be surprised at some we sold it to. They used to all buy it. It was good whiskey, and if they knew you made good whiskey you could get a good price for it.

QUESTION: Did you ever go into Belle Haven to sell it?

MR. ARNOLD: Yeah, no.

MRS. ARNOLD: No, they came to him!

MR. ARNOLD: Belle Haven, there wasn't anything up there in those days.

MRS. ARNOLD: But everybody out of Alexandria used to come down.

MR. ARNOLD: Yeah, and we used to take it to town and sell it.

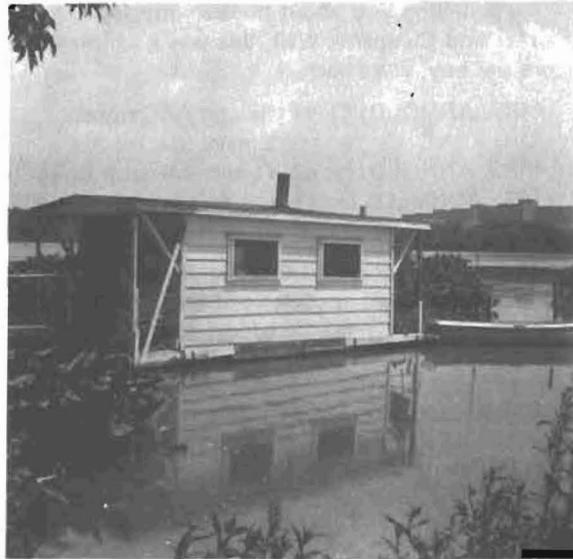
When I was a little kid, this guy, Willie, had a still. And he used to have these big barrels. This was a huge thing, I can remember the darn thing. It was a great big copper thing and it used to burn charcoal. The charcoal wouldn't make smoke so of 'course the people couldn't see smoke.

But just to give you an idea of how open it was, [now] Belle Haven Road came down there right in front of it, just about where the gas station is. That's where this little shack was where Willie had his still set up in it. So you can imagine how open people were with things like that. And the people down in this little creek, they had stills set up, little stills. There was nobody to bother 'em. The revenuers very seldom come down here.

# Gallagher

This was the period during prohibition too. And a lot of these people were rum runners, bootleggers. They had smoke screens attached to their cars, and if they were being chased by a cop they would just pull a wire and it would let some kind of a chemical go into the exhaust and just engulf the whole road. It was just like going into a cloud bank. The cop wouldn't know where the heck he was, y'know. That was how they eluded pursuit in the old days. Smoke screens and speed.

Hunting Creek used to be a big creek. They had arks floating on Hunting Creek. People lived in these arks, like people live in trailers. These people didn't pay any taxes, just lived on these arks. Bootlegging and all kinds of illicit stuff going on.



*An Ark, located on Hunting Creek before 1959.*

# Adams

Somebody used to see a light off the point of Mt. Vernon at the wharf, and when you got down there, there wouldn't be any light. Allie Nightingale who built the Nightingale Motel (his son built the trailer park) and I used to spend a lot of time on the river. It was poor fishing, but people had to have some good drinking whiskey. There was moonshining out there and we would go down the river and get it from the boats who would bring in good distilled bonded whiskey from Europe. I don't know too much about it and I've never had a drink of whiskey in my life but I liked the thrill of going in a fast boat down the river.

# Penn Daw Fire Dept: Rouse

**QUESTION:** What year did you start the Penn Daw Fire Department?

Well, we started it somewhere back in 1939 to 1940. The closest fire department was in the city of Alexandria and the closest one in the county was out in Franconia. We had some house fires but mostly field fires. Every spring when people would start cleaning up they would light fires and they'd get away from them.

They'd rake up the yards and try to burn all that trash up, then the wind would catch a bunch of it and blow it over into a field and the first thing you'd know the whole field would be on fire. I've seen practically half of that Hybla Valley field on fire. Sometimes we'd fight those things all night long.

You couldn't even get the truck back in some of those fields. It'd be too rough. So we'd have to walk back to the truck, fill it up, go back out there, squirt some water on it. When we first started we only had one fire truck and then we got a trailer from the Civil Defense that had a big pump on it, but it didn't carry any water and if we wasn't near a pond, it wasn't any good. The truck that we had carried 500 gallons of water and we put out most fires with that.

**QUESTION:** Was the fire department volunteer?

Strictly volunteer, we had no paid men whatsoever.

At one time we had about 130 men on the roll. Of course, we never got that many at every fire. But it took that many to work the fire department. We had some men that would fight fires and we had some men that helped raise money, like run the bingo games or run the horseshows that we used to have and the carnivals. When we first started we didn't get anything from the county. We had to get the money together to build the building and buy the truck.

**QUESTION:** What kind of fund raisers did you have?

The biggest ones we'd have would be the carnivals. We'd have a carnival that would run for about a week. It used to run up on the fields on the top of the hill from the old firestation. This is where Memco and Beacon Mall are now. Of course when we were running them then that field was a big airport.

**QUESTION:** What was the worst fire you ever fought?

I guess the biggest one, was where there was another airport down at Hybla Valley and the hanger caught fire. It was a couple hundred feet long and was on fire from one end to the other. That was about the hottest fire but there was no people in that. The worst fire I remember, was the small house down in Gum Springs. Three little children were in the house. Evidently something happened and the house caught fire and burnt all three of the little children up. It was the worst because we had to go in there and get those little children out.

**QUESTION:** Where did you go to school?

My first school was in a one room church. All the grades were in one room. There was only two or three in one grade. One teacher would teach first to this grade over here then she'd get them to studying and go to the next one. So that year by year you already knew what was going to be in your next grade cause you'd sit there and listen to it. This was good in a way because it wasn't just something brand new when you went into that next grade.

After fourth grade out here, and the fifth and sixth grades, I went up to what's called Snowden school up on Fort Hunt Road. We had to ride the old electric train that ran from Mount Vernon to Alexandria. In the seventh grade I went to an Alexandrian school.

QUESTION: Do you know anything about Dyke Marsh?

When I was a kid the old electric train ran right down just about where the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway is now. Right where you could see that sort of channel come in right close to the road, there was an old house boat and this old fella, we used to call him "Cigarette Dodson," lived down in that house boat. He trapped and fished and made a regular living. Then when they put the boulevard down thru there they bought the land and they wouldn't give him right of way to park his car or to get across to his place so he had to move.

QUESTION: How did they call you to come to a fire?

In those days when you called in a fire you called the operator and told her you had a fire. She'd take the address and when she rang our phone in the firehouse it set a siren off and it rang until somebody ran in and answered the phone. We had some men that lived right across the street from the firehouse, then after we put a few additions on we put a little bunk room up there and we had a lot of single men that lived right at the firehouse. Of course, when the phone rang and the siren went off they'd jump off, answer the phone and write up on the board where the fire was. And being so close to it they'd get the first truck and go right on out. Then all the other volunteers would come in and it'd be on the board where the first truck had gone so we'd get in the second and third.

QUESTION: What did you do when you weren't a volunteer?

I was working for the C & P Telephone Company most of the time up until World War II. Then I went with Trans World Airlines and stayed with them for about four years. Then after the war was over I went back to the telephone company and then came here to Mt. Vernon. I've been here 29 years, and I do repairs and so forth to everything on the place, the buildings, the furniture in the buildings, the equipment that it takes to keep the grass mowed and keep the grounds up.

## Barnes

Our biggest disaster we had here was where the Shell filling station is on Route 1 up there by the Texaco. Right back of it was a big dairy barn and they converted the stable into an apartment house and ten families lived there during the war. The people in this area knew it was the old stable. Soldiers lived there during the war. I think about twenty children lived in there. It caught on fire and burned up a lady and three children. They found two of them but they never found the third one.

My wife turned the alarm in. She was out in the yard hanging up clothes; the barn was just about 50 yards from our house. She went back in the house and looked out the kitchen window. She saw smoke. She just picked up the phone and called Joe Dove, the first paid fireman at Penn Daw. She said, "Joe, the old barn is on fire!" She grabbed a sweater and ran out in the back yard. He got in and come down, one man on a truck. They fought and it burned.

That was the first fire that the Penn Daw had that they lost anybody. And up until that time there was no building code in Fairfax County. When you went to build your

house you could build it upside down and they could have cared less. Just so you was on the books so they could tax you for it. After the fire, the people in this community gathered at the Penn Daw fire house and they demanded that the Board of Supervisors start what was then known as the building code.

Now the other disaster we had was a transport coming in on a night when a ceiling was down on top of your head. It came in over here on Popkins Lane, that little brick house that sets on the end of Popkins Lane. Well, it came in so low that it took the top off of that well house and missed the house by inches. It came and landed down on the bottom there. All the people in the plane got out, including one lady who had a little baby.

The boys at the Penn Daw fire house was standing out in the ramp looking up in the sky. They said, "Listen to that plane coming!" They jumped in their cars and went down. They hauled everybody out. The only one who really got hurt was the pilot who lost his eyesight. They gathered everyone up in automobiles and the ambulance. Penn Daw was the first fire department in Fairfax County to have an ambulance.

Mr. Proffit said he heard the noise and got up and looked out the window, and as far as he could see was just a sheet of fire. The stewardesses, they got the people out. Just as they got them out and cleared the plane, they had a sheet of fire almost a quarter of a mile of nothing but fire. They were very fortunate that no one got hurt in that.

## Wilson

QUESTION: What sort of activities took place at the Old Penn Daw Firehouse?

Well, they used to have the carnivals, dances, bingo. Then they had a motor cycle race. Don't think they had but one motorcycle race. That caused too much confusion, everybody was parkin' here and parkin' there and takin' up everybody's place. That was up at the Reid Airfield.

QUESTION: When was the Penn Daw Firehouse built?

Best I remember, it was in the forties.

QUESTION: Where was it located?

You know where the Burger Chef used to be? Well, right below that. That was the original Penn Daw Fire Department. They're using it for a rug place now. Was an antique place.

QUESTION: What area did the Penn Daw Fire Department cover?

Well, at that time Penn Daw was the only one around here. Wasn't no Mount Vernon Fire Department. It was the only one in this area except down there at Fort Belvoir. But anywhere in this area Penn Daw would take care of them.

QUESTION: Tell us about some of the big fires in the area.

Well, one was down on East Groveton Street, about the second or third house. There was a right big fire there. They had a bunch of brush fires because all this was nothing but woods. People would start fires, then they'd get out of hand.

QUESTION: How has the fire department changed since back in the forties?

Now it's practically all paid firemen. I think they still got what they call the volunteer fire department up there. Back then there wasn't no pay. They had big sirens out and when that siren went off, well, all the volunteers, if they wasn't working, they'd run down to the firehouse and jump on a truck and take off.

You have to take the training before you can become chief. Back then it was mostly on the job, like going out and training how to fight that fire.



*Penn Daw Fire Department in parade*

## Chinn

In the early 40's when Penn Daw Fire Department was first organized, it was more or less the center of attraction. We had the community civic meetings, V.F.W. meets and other organizations at the fire house. We also had fund raising activities going on like turkey shoots, dances, bingo, fund drives, and carnivals. Before the Dixie Pig was there, the fire department used to hold carnivals there on the corner.

Most of the equipment we had was army surplus. A '49 Chevrolet command car we converted into the first ambulance we had. A '36 Indiana pumper was also surplus. This is where we got our start. It wasn't until 1951 that we bought our first custom piece of fire apparatus, a 1951 Mac with a 750 gallon pump and a 500 gallon water tank on it.

At that time we didn't have any fire hydrants out in this area. Fires that we went to, we had to carry our own water or draft water from a creek, swimming pool, or something. It wasn't until the late 50's that we got our water supply from fire hydrants. When I first came to work for Penn Daw, we had two hydrants, down at the Penn Daw Hotel and at the Belle Haven Country Club. If we had a fire in Engleside, in Hybla Valley, or Groveton, we had to carry water from one of those hydrants, whichever was the closest.

In those days we didn't have the training or the equipment we have now. We had no breathing apparatus. You had to go in and just hold your handkerchief over your nose and inhale the smoke. Now we have Scott Air Packs, self-contained breathing apparatus that we can put on our back and go in. Most of the fire was fought from the outside at that time. Now all the fire fighting is done from within the building.

The volunteers did all this. We didn't hire nobody to do this because we didn't have the money. We had one of the most active volunteer departments in the county. It stayed this way from 1944 up until about 1965. It was at that time the volunteers started dropping off. We had so much activity going on in the station that a volunteer couldn't work a full time job and be a volunteer, too.

Our cannon is a memorial to the veterans of World War II from the Groveton area, dedicated by the V.F.W. The reason we moved from down on the highway was because the state widened Number 1 highway and it make it kinda hard getting onto the highway. That's when we decided to buy this piece of land here, a little better than an acre of ground for \$25,000. The building itself was \$203,000. At the same time we were buying a new ambulance. The volunteers decided, "OK, let's make a deal with Fairfax County. We'll give 'em the building and all the assets, providing they supply us with 26 additional paid men." We knew the volunteers were fading out. It's worked out real well.

I was on the plane crash in Washington National Airport when the Bolivian pilot crashed the plane and killed 55 people. At the time it was one of the worst disasters in this country. I was on the scene of the collapse of the Skyline Center. I was the first chief officer there and I ran the scene for about 17 days, working 12-14 hours a day until we got all the bodies out. We had an apartment house up here in Groveton on Eastside Drive and Number 1 highway where three or four kids burned up and the mother. At that time we had no water so we lost the whole building. We were unable to get anybody out of it. By the time we got there it was pretty well involved in fire.

In the volunteer departments the chiefs are elected by popular votes of the membership. I work for Fairfax County and now it's strictly through competitive exams. All the way up.

We have three shifts, A, B, and C. One shift works days, one works nights and the other's off. They work a 10 hour day, and a 14 hour night. Right now we have 33 men working at this station. That's 11 on a shift. Out of the station we run an engine company which consists of 2 (1,000 gallon per minute) pumpers, a 100 foot ladder truck which is a tiller (driven from the front and back), a heavy duty squad truck, two ambulances, and a jeep. We do all the water rescue from Alexandria to Fort Belvoir on the Potomac. We have two boats, one big boat and one little boat. We get a lot of calls, water rescue, especially when summer storms come up and sail boats turn over. We go out and pick people up.

The Penn Daw Station is still leading the balance of the county in total calls. They run more calls than any other station. We have 25 other stations and this is the busiest station in Fairfax County.

## Gypsies: Devers

We used to have them (gypsies) come by a little later than this time of year. I imagined they came up from the south. They would come into the motels along No. 1 highway. They spread out. I never had any trouble with them. The man would come to the office in a very big car. Once in a while they'd come in a truck. The next would be his wife.

She would be dressed in a gypsy costume. I would worry because they were hard to get out, not as far as paying, but they would bring in others and they would want to stay and stay. Of course I didn't know whether they'd have a gathering or what.

## Vozzola

I remember when one of the gypsy kings died and they were all on the grounds of the Alexandria Hospital. They were dark. Some of the women appeared to be very beautiful. In those days they traveled with horses.

## Dove

I don't know about too many gypsies. They would maybe rent little houses and stay in some of these trailer parks and cabins. We had one cabin at Totem Pole Lodge at the corner of Richmond Highway, that had a fire in there one day, and there was some 26 gypsies living in a one room cabin.

## Proffitt

My wife's grandfather ran a dairy where Beacon Field was, before it was ever an airfield. He used to run a dairy for Mr. Reid, who owned the property. That family grew up at the corner of South Kings Highway and Memorial Street. The gypsies used to camp in there along South Kings Highway. I was never over to the camp, but she's been there when she was small. She could show you a scar on her knee, that she got running away from the camp one time. They were going down there to spy on them or something. Somebody saw them and they all ran. She ran and got her leg caught in a piece of barbed wire. I don't know what time of year they were camping there. Probably spring and summer, because they travel with the weather.

## Hecox

There was this group of gypsies that come into the area during the war. The draft took them off the streets and put them in houses. I happen to know a lady that was one of them. She married the father of one of my son's best friends. You know, some of those people can be very good and very honest. They get a bad reputation. It's just like anybody that does something wrong and then everybody gets blamed, you know?

## Ghost stories: Sprouse

Did I tell you the ghost story about the mean man? His name was Richard Chichester and he lived down on Telegraph Road and he was so mean to his slaves that they called him "Hard Chichester" behind his back. He had been heard walking and dropping his boots down on the floor when he takes them off to go to bed. He lives in a house called Mount Airy which is down near Fort Belvoir and he's buried across Telegraph Road in Newington subdivision. There's a little family cemetery there and his tombstone just says "Hard Chichester." The tombstone originally said "Richard Chichester" but there was a bad storm in the 1920's down there and the next day they went over to the cemetery to see if any damage had been done and found that lightning had struck and chipped off a corner of the stone and so it took the "Ric" off his first name and now it just says "hard Chichester." It was very muddy and there were no footprints within the little grave yard and yet they couldn't find this other part of the piece of stone and so its sort of vengeance upon the man.

He was supposed to have been so nasty he kicked out one of the slaves eyes because the slave wasn't quick enough in helping him take off his boots. When he died a red rabbit ran out from under his bed and the slaves all said that that was the devil leaving.

## Adams

There used to be a barn down the road where they said you could hear chains rattling. A few of us banded together and said we were going to see. We had a shot gun and anything was down there we were prepared to meet it. We heard these chains and it was as natural as it could be. They said they were chains of the slaves that early slave holders had chained up and left and they died of starvation. There was no barn down there, but you could hear the chains dragging on the floor just as plain, if your imagination was good enough.

We found out there was a man who had a couple of dogs that he didn't want to buy dog tags for, so he used to chain his dogs out there and that was the chain dragging around. They didn't look like the devil, just like mongrel dogs.

Most stories are just amusing things for children. You get around the fireplace and listen to these stories. Of course the fire was half dark and the fireplace would be the only light in the house and you could look into the fireplace with flames leaping and someone would tell you, "there he comes through the wall now!" You turn around right quick and see your own shadow or somebody else's that was reflected from the fireplace to the wall. The kids would always scream and holler and they were sure after that there was a ghost 'cause they saw it.

I knew one fellow who claimed that he had mysterious powers and voodoo power. He would chew up a clump of fat meat and you wouldn't be aware that he was chewing this fat meat, and he would tell you, "I can spit lightning!" When he had a good mouthful of the meat chewed up—and he chewed tobacco and had cultivated the art of spitting a long ways in a stright line—he'd spit the grease into the fire and she'd go up in a big blue flame. We all figured him as being a weird man that could do things.

And when he got so he couldn't get around at all, he told some of us about how he used to chew that fat meat and spit it in the fire. He said, "You chew it and it'll make you sick!"