

**Robert Morgan**  
**Interview Recorded: June 14, 2007**  
**Interviewer: David Schenck**  
**Transcriptionist: Cathy Mann**  
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David Schenck: This is David Schenck and it is June 14, 2007.

Robert Morgan: This is Robert Morgan. It is June 14, 2007. We are in Henderson County down on Green River at my mother's house.

DS: So, Robert, tell me how long your family has been here in the Green River Valley.

RM: This property where we are now was bought by my great, great grandfather, Daniel Pace, in 1838. He moved here from over around Mountain Page and before they had lived in upper South Carolina. The Pace's are an old family going all the way back to Jamestown actually, moving across Virginia, North Carolina, into South Carolina and then back up here. Other branches of the family have been in this area from a little earlier in the nineteenth century but it was the Pace family that bought this land.

DS: The last time we talked you told me a little bit about the different changes that this land has gone through in terms of use, different kinds of agriculture and things. Could you talk about that a little bit more?

RM: Well, I was fascinated from the time I was a little kid by the presence of the Indians here, what seemed almost a ghostly presence. Here on the hill down here in the pasture, there was an Indian graveyard supposedly and we were always told that and we were afraid to walk by there in the dark, that kind of thing. As a kid working in the fields we'd find all the arrowheads and pieces of pottery. As a kid I just assumed they were Cherokee but I later found out the Cherokees didn't have villages this far to the East so they must be from Indian tribes and nations much older than the Cherokees here, possibly thousands of years older. Certainly this land was used by the Native Americans, villages, agriculture, arrowhead workshops. You can see where they chipped their arrowheads in certain places. But, of course, the subsistence kind of farming they did in the nineteenth century was centered on corn growing. Your corn crop furnished you with so much. The lower leaves became the fodder for horses. The tops of the corn above the ears of corn became the food of cattle in the wintertime. You don't see anymore stacks of tops in Green River but when I was a kid everybody had a great stack of tops around a pole. It would be about twenty to thirty feet high with an old tire on top.

DS: Right, to keep it from blowing away. So the flooding plain around the river I guess was ideal soil for this, all the way back.

RM: Oh, the river bottoms were as ideal for corn as you can imagine. Corn loves wet ground. Any amount of moisture is good for corn and even corn will grow when there's been a little standing water in the field and that loamy soil around Green River was just perfect for corn. I'm sure they grew really big crops of it but you could do everything from making gritted bread when the corn was first ripe, and of course, roasting ears called "roast nears" to be boiled or to be roasted. You could do it either way. When it matured you could grind it up for meal for cornbread. You could crack it for grits. It was used really for just about everything. Cobs were used for starting fires, as well as making pipes and that kind of thing. A lot of people would sprout their corn with barley and ferment it and make corn whiskey. That was always a favorite with the old timers.

DS: Best way to transport corn.

RM: Un-huh.

DS: So I think you told me last time that maybe it was your grandfather who had done some orchards in part of this land. Is that right?

RM: My great grandfather, Frank Pace, loved orchards and when he came back from the Civil War and built a house down by the river he set out apple trees and peach trees, a lot of peach trees, up on the mountain. See they used the mountaintops for peach orchards because they didn't get hit by frost up there and they got wind that would keep the frost off and, of course, the mountaintop has what orchardists call air grainage because the cold air sinks away from it. So the peach orchard was on top of the mountain, the apple orchard below that. He also had pears and plum trees. He was a real farmer and orchardist. He had this place looking so beautiful. And then his son-in-law, my grandfather, John Morgan, was an awfully good farmer. He terraced the land, built pasture gates and wooden fences in places.

DS: So in terms of the river itself we talked a little bit again about this last time. I think it was a major flood in 1916 but what events in the life of the river do you remember or remember being told about, the role that the river played just in people's lives and shaped the culture of the community?

RM: Well, the boys always played in the river. That was part of the fascination of fishing and swimming there and walking along it, but the kinds of stories associated with this stretch of the river, of course, we're near the headwater, it's a long river and ( ) that runs down into the Piedmont, the Lemons Hole is named for a man who drowned there. The Jim Lee Shoals named for an early settler. What we called the Bee Gum Hole is called that because after a flood a bee gum was found, a bee hive was found there. But my uncles and my dad had stories of catching big fish in certain pools, where the biggest trout was caught. But the river for my dad

and for one of my uncles and for my great grandpas was a place to trap mink and muskrat. They have been trapping on this river and its feeder creeks from the very beginning. I can remember my dad coming back in the morning with his traps with a black mink two feet long, worth twenty-five, thirty dollars even then. To some extent my family lived like the pioneers did. We got our water out of the spring, kept their milk and butter in the springhouse, plowed with a horse, trapped and hunted on the river. There were ducks; my dad shot ducks on the river. He actually shot a Canadian goose once, perhaps by mistake.

DS: Yes, or a lost goose. And you were telling me about, I think it was in connection with the Maybin family, was it a cave or something that you got access through one of the pools?

RM: Oh, one of the great stories about the Maybins is the lost lead mine of the Cherokees. The Maybin family came here very early, either during or just after the Revolution when this was still Cherokee country. They got to know the Cherokee Indians and were friendly with them and learned an awful lot about hunting and fishing and the herbs and the Cherokees showed them where the lead mine was. Now the legend is to reach the lead mine you have to go through water. It's probably in a cave that can only be reached from under water. You come up into the cave and dig the lead out. Of course, lead is usually found where there's silver. Silver and lead are closely connected so they probably got silver out of there too. But the story is the Maybins during the Civil War when nobody could get lead, got lead for bullets.

DS: One story that I had heard and this is why I was asking you earlier about the Capps connection in your family, the story about one person in that family walking down to Travelers Rest and back, I guess working in the mill down there and then the family had preserved some grove or trees around that. Have you heard that story? Is that a familiar story?

RM: I don't know that story. There's a story that one of the Capps worked on the state house in Columbia and walked down there and when he was walking back he disappeared. They thought he was killed by outlaws or by robbers on the way. But people walked to Greenville all the time or drove their wagon to sell things, usually on a semi annual basis. They would carry the produce in the fall and the produce in the spring, ginseng, hams, anything they could sell, and they primarily sold that door-to-door. The way you made your best money was you just knocked on doors and said would you like some hams or molasses or honey or whatever you were selling.

DS: Guess there was substantial textile industry fairly early on in Greenville and trading, people came up from Charleston trading.

RM: Well, the textile industry in South Carolina did not develop until after the Civil War. The great planters and leaders had been ruined by the war and to rebuild the Piedmont and their world they decided to build mills where they could spin thread from their own cotton instead

of shipping it to New England. The cotton mill industry sprang up all along the Piedmont from Georgia into North Carolina.

DS: And the mill here had an enormous impact on this area.

RM: Well, that came later. That came just after year 1900 when they dammed up the river to generate electricity for a cotton mill. It did change the economy. There was more money. Some people would argue it didn't help since people quit farming and taking care of their farms to work in the cotton mills and it brought cotton mill people in, who were considered by the country people not the best kind of people. You would hear terms like cotton mill trash. People who came in usually from South Carolina or Piedmont around Gastonia that had worked in cotton mills before were a little different. Their culture was a little different though many of them had mountain roots two or three generations back. But yes, a lot of my relatives worked in the cotton mill, not at the very beginning probably, but in the Depression. Some of the leaders in the community were people brought in with the cotton mill, the Bell family, the Boys family.

DS: To go back more to the land itself, special places in this area either that are special to you or that you think of historically or culturally as special landmarks in the valley?

RM: Oh, many of them, going to the very head of the river, the Abe Jones Flats where I was told as a boy the last fight of the settlers here with the Cherokees occurred and it was pretty much a massacre of the Indians' camp there. They had made a raid and stolen some cattle or attacked some place and the people in Green River got together and attacked the Indians and killed most of them and the rest fled west, back to. That's the story I heard.

DS: So that's up at the headwaters?

RM: At the very head of the river, what's called the Abe Jones Flats. But all along the river there are things of association. A mile or two below the Abe Jones Flats is a big rock by the river known in the community as the Prayer Rock.

DS: I think I know where that is.

RM: When things were, you know, going really bad or people were troubled about something men would gather there for prayer meeting and farther down in the Bane area of the river there was the Prayer Tree, which I think was a big tulip poplar, same kind of thing but people would gather there for services. All along the river there are pools where the boys swam and caught fish and, you know, would talk about where the biggest fish was caught. A major tributary is, of course, Rock Creek where the great mill was really high shoals and falls. That was probably the biggest grist mill for a long time in the area.

But I grew up with stories of trapping along the river, all the trapping that had been done on the tributaries of the river and way over into what's called the Long Hollow and the ( ) Maybin Gap, the big spring, over there where the CCC road goes now.

DS: I guess I've heard somebody describe things called baptism rock, but were there pools associated with the churches and baptisms and I guess submersions?

RM: Every church had a place where they would traditionally have baptizing. All these churches were Baptist churches, either that or related to Baptist churches. Green River had it's baptizings in the Lemons Hole and then down at the place right close to the entrance to the Green River Road now covered up by the highway. Now they used that later because it was deeper and had been pumped out by the sand pump. I don't think these exist anymore but the Freeman Bulldozing and Grading Company had several sand pumps on the river. As the river got silted up there was a lot of sand in it and they would build a kind of storage place where they would pump sand out of the river and store it and then they could drop it down in the truck, back the truck into this kind of a crib.

DS: So they were harvesting in effect?

RM: They were harvesting sand all the time and where they really pumped out a lot of sand there would be a deep, deep hole where you would swim. These were not natural holes and they would fill up again eventually. But the Lemons Hole was always deep. The Bee Gum Hole was deeper. We never had baptizing there because that's where we swam and where we did our best fishing when I was a little kid, in the Bee Gum Hole. But certainly Cedar Springs had it's baptizings in a bend of the river there very close. The problem was with a church like Mount Olive was way up on the mountain, they either had to dam up a branch, which they did sometimes, but usually they had their baptizings down here in the river and often with the Green River Church. The churches would have a baptizing, big crowd, people singing.

DS: Any particular plants or animals, I mean you've talked about mink and about muskrat and about trout, of course, and ducks and geese, but that you associate with this area in your own memories, things that, you mentioned the Prayer Tree, which was a tulip poplar probably. They seem to grow big up here. But any particular associations with any animals, plants, or places?

RM: Well, when you're in the river if you do a lot of fishing in the river, you see an awful lot of water snakes. And as far as I know, they're actually harmless. They don't look harmless. When you're fishing in the river the snakes are usually in the trees and they come corkscrewing off the limbs down in the river and flop around and I've had them flop against me in the water as they're trying to get away.

DS: A little startling.

RM: So that intimate sense of the stream is very different from looking at it from the outside because the trees along the river.

DS: So you were wading?

RM: I was wading in the river. You see the muskrats zipping under the bank and that sort of thing.

DS: And you're watching your footing so you have a sense of what's about you.

RM: You have to go very slow. There's a kind of intimacy with water and with the whirl of the water that you get wading the river that you don't get any other way. You're in the water and, of course, it's cold but it's wonderful on a hot day, a hot summer day, to get out there. Fishing is a lot of fun. You also see turtles, which you never see unless you're really right down in the water. There are some pretty big snapping turtles, mud turtles in this river. I've never heard of anybody being bitten by one but you will see them on a rock sometimes or you will see them in the water.

DS: Yeah, they're big. They're quite impressive, quite impressive. So we talked a little bit about this last time as well when we talked about some of the epidemics and things, but major events or upheavals in the community. I think we also talked about when the railroad came in, but just things that were passed on or that were shaping things that were told to you about things that had happened.

RM: Well, the most dramatic things that I know about in the river valley, the first the typhoid epidemics.

DS: That was roughly when?

RM: There was a really bad one I think in the 1880's that killed an awful lot of people, and of course, they didn't know what caused typhoid. They hadn't isolated the bacteria at that time and it seemed like almost a bad, an evil spirit had gotten into the river valley. It started up near the head of the river and kind of worked its way down. We now know it gets in the water and very likely was in the river, was contaminated. But that left a lot of fear in the community of typhoid and I can remember as a boy people were very much afraid of it and it would come back periodically though not on the scale of that first epidemic. But typhoid killed a lot of people in this valley and other valleys in the mountains too. They didn't have any antibiotics to treat it at that time. In fact, they probably didn't know at that time what caused it though in a few years they did. I think by the turn of the century the doctors knew what was causing typhoid.

On a more mythic level was what we call milk sick and that was a very mysterious thing. People had different theories about what caused that. Was it a particular plant? Was it an animal

bite? Was it something a witch, a spell a witch, people believed in witchcraft and believed in curses and babies being marked and that kind of thing, but people died of milk sick. That was also later solved by doctors. They found the plant. I can't remember exactly what it was. It was not night shade. It was another plant that would be eaten by the cow and the milk would be poison and the people drank the milk after being poisoned.

But one of the most dramatic parts of the culture of this valley, probably not talked about too much these days, are the religious controversies. Baptist churches are always splitting. They quarrel over doctrine or over choice of the preacher or something and when you see a little church or a new church was often built because people would split off to another church. The mother church would be split into two or three because they had quarreled, but sometimes it was just because they needed a church closer to where they lived and they didn't want to go so far. There was actually a church just up the river here where the Bane graveyard is called the Bane Chapel that had been built by a group of people who quarreled with the Green River congregation. But far more dramatic was the controversy around 1904, 1905, 1906 when Pentecostal Holiness revivals swept the area and people who were involved in those revivals were often emotionally upset, sort of like the great awakening in New England. Families quarreled or families split apart over this. People including my great grandfather who had built the church and his daughter, my grandmother, were expelled from the church for attending Pentecostal services. My Grandfather Morgan was deeply antagonistic toward the Pentecostals and he and his wife quarreled. But my grandmother and great grandfather just kept attending the Baptist church anyway and it all sort of blew over but it would be revived from time to time when another Pentecostal revival was being held.

DS: You've written some about speaking in tongues.

RM: I have. I have a poem called "The Gift of Tongues" about my dad speaking in tongues.

DS: Was this in the Baptist church or Pentecostal church?

RM: That was actually in the Baptist church but he also attended Pentecostal services and there were people in the Baptist church who were kind of Pentecostals and it was an uneasy kind of thing. Southern Baptists, strict Southern Baptists, frowned upon that kind of enthusiastic worship. But I have a novel called "The Truest Pleasure," which is based on the marriage and my Morgan grandparents. That's the center of the conflict between the Baptists and Pentecostal Holiness. Pentecostals are the only denomination that from the very beginning who was both black and white.

Something that you've probably already come across in your research is the rage, you could almost call it the mania, to find zircons in this area. When I was a kid you could walk across the pasture or through the woods and there were holes all over the pasture, all over the woods, on the banks above the river where my great uncles and my great grandpa had dug holes looking for zircons because Thomas Edison had let it be known that he would pay good money for these industrial grade zircons.

DS: Can you explain what they are a little bit because I have a feeling that folks listening to this may not know.

RM: Well, Edison was looking for something that would make the perfect filament for the light bulb and for a while he was making filaments with zirconium, part of the process. When he had the contract for lighting Philadelphia that's what he was using.

DS: So what your uncles were looking for were? I don't even know how it comes.

RM: Stones about the size of the end of your finger. They're dark. They have surfaces that make them look a little bit like gemstones but these are not the quality, you know, you wouldn't put them in a ring or anything. They're just industrial grade zircons.

DS: And they're just scattered around, it's not a mine?

RM: No, they're in veins. They were looking for veins for deposits of them and the mountain here above Tuxedo there's a vein, goes all the way through the mountain and one of my relatives, Dr. Levi Jones, opened a mine and was selling them to Edison. And somebody else opened the vein at the other end of the mountain but Captain Toms who was a leader in Hendersonville, claimed that he had bought during the Civil War the mineral rights to the whole county.

DS: The whole county?

RM: The whole county while the men were away in the Confederate army. So Levi Jones and Captain Toms sued each other because Jones claimed he owned the land and he owned the zircons on it, and it was a pretty hot controversy. Then Edison discovered tungsten and it was all moot anyway.

DS: The market was gone.

RM: Nobody wanted those industrial quality zircons. Actually Levi Jones and Toms became good friends after it all blew over. But Levi Jones was a very interesting man. He was called Dr. Jones and he was the brother of my great grandmother who was the daughter, they were the children of John Jones, who joined the Union army. Dr. Jones' only medical training as far as I know was as a core man in the Union army over in Tennessee. My great grandfather served in the Confederate army that married Mary Ann Jones, the sister, but Dr. Jones was a real

entrepreneur. He was into all kinds of businesses and he practiced medicine. One of the favorite quotes from Dr. Jones, anytime he came to a bedside when somebody was sick, he would say what this patient needs is a little whiskey and he would send out for some whiskey and then he would sample it. He wanted to be sure it was of the right quality. (Laughter)

DS: He shows up I think in some of the history places, little anecdotes about him, maybe the history of Tuxedo.

RM: Well, Spurgeon Morgan who lived down by the lake, who's his great grandson I believe, has this big hollowed out rock, something like a bathtub, which he calls the medicine rock and Dr. Jones had that in his backyard. I guess the spring water was running into it and when somebody came who had been shot up or bleeding you'd take him out there and wash off the wound with the medicine rock. You can go down there and take a picture of it.

DS: The railroad came in to Flat Rock in 1899, is that right?

RM: 1879.

DS: 1879 and what impact was there from that? Do you have stories?

RM: Oh, the railroad made enormous difference to the area. As far as the family is concerned I'll give you an example. When Frank Pace, my great grandpa, built a house by the river, there was not a spring close by and the family spring further up there hill there was so good, such a bold spring with fine water, that he bought himself in Greenville this long auger and he bored holes out of pine logs and put them together as a pipe and piped water down to the house from the hill, almost a quarter of a mile, maybe not quite a quarter of a mile.

DS: An engineering feat.

RM: And that's what they had, water came through those called pump logs. When the railroad came he could buy iron pipes so as those logs rotted they were replaced and as a kid, when the water still came down that rusting pipe from the spring, all the way down to the springhouse beside the house and around the hill. But the big difference was that you could sell things in Hendersonville because there was a market there and you didn't have to go to Greenville to sell things. There were other opportunities. Hendersonville really began to grow then after the railroad reached it at that time and, of course, the people in Flat Rock coming up from Charleston could take the train and not have to bring all their carriages and all their servants and things in a great wagon train coming from Charleston and Columbia and Atlanta. But it changed the culture a great deal. People began to ride the train to get out of the mountains. It was so hard to get out of the mountains before that.

DS: The connection was, as I recall, like you said, down towards Charleston it took longer for the railroad to come across from the Piedmont North Carolina, didn't it or was it about the same time that they came up there by Black Mountain?

RM: That was about the same time. I've forgotten the exact date.

DS: Yeah, me too.

RM: It was pretty close to that time. The railroad came to Asheville, this one came from Spartanburg.

DS: I've just always thought of this area as being more connected somehow with Greenville and Charleston and South Carolina than with other parts of North Carolina, just the way that people travel and trade.

RM: Most of the people here had come from South Carolina and moved into the mountains from South Carolina so most of the families had pretty close ties to South Carolina. Right here it's about the same distance to Greenville as to Asheville. And when I was a kid, for reasons I've never figured out, every August we drove down to Greenville to buy school clothes and for Christmas we went to Asheville to buy Christmas presents, and I don't know why.

DS: Some deep significance.

RM: I mean you'd think it would be just the opposite. You know Greenville was so hot, you come out of the cool mountains and go into this boiling furnace in Greenville.

DS: In August. So how have you seen the population of the community change over the years? Are there new kinds of people living here now? What has shifted just in your lifetime?

RM: A total change. When I was a kid everybody in this valley knew each other and many of them were related. They had gone to school together, related, if not closely, you know, three generations, four generations back. But you knew all the families, the Beddingfields, the Banes, the Ballards up on Mount Olive.

DS: And these families had been here for a hundred years anyway.

RM: Some of them had been here even longer than that but you not only knew the people, you knew stories about their ancestors and who had fit for the Union and who had fit for the Confederate army and stories about who had been killed and who got sick. When Bowen Ward was plowing his plow hit a stump and hit him in the stump and he died of peritonitis, that sort of thing, up there on Rock Creek. Some people had bought cows from each other and sold hogs to each other. It was in that sense. Many people then as now were quarrelsome and it was certainly not all hunky dory but people really had a sense of who they were and of belonging in a community, and when somebody died everybody would come with food, loading down the table with food and everybody came to the funeral and everybody went to the cemetery and everybody

went to the baptizings. There would be singing schools where all the kids would learn to read shape notes, that sort of thing. So when I was a little kid the culture was probably similar to what it was in the nineteenth century, didn't really change a lot. There were cars and a few tractors.

DS: And these would have been what years when you were?

RM: I was born in '44 so I'm talking about the late 40s and very early 50s. What really changed this county was the GE plant. There were several events occurred in the middle 50s that really began to change things. That was I would say the main thing because it changed the economy and people began to make good wages. The other, which happened at the same time, was the strike in the cotton mill.

DS: Yes, we talked about that.

RM: That was a dramatic change. It turned the community against itself, people who were for the union, people against it. Somebody dynamited the George Boys speed boat. I've been told since I talked to you that it was two people who were shooting into the truck at the cotton mill. I just thought it was Jimmy Staney but there were more people than that. That was very dramatic.

DS: Boys was the owner of the mill, is that right?

RM: Right, the Boys family, I believe had come here from England possibly and bought that mill in the 30s. It was a family thing and, you know, they gave a Christmas party every year and they gave the kids Christmas presents. You got a box. I got several of those boxes. It was a paper box like a shoe box sort of with holly berries printed on it, holly leaves and berries, and you got a little toy and a whistle and oranges and apples and nuts and candy, stuff like that. The two people who were considered sort of the valedictorians graduating from Tuxedo would give them the R. W. Boys medal. I have an R. W. Boys medal somewhere.

DS: Very good, congratulations.

RM: A little gold (Laughter).

DS: But the union battle I think you said.

RM: It was never the same. It was never the same after that, just too much bad feeling.

DS: Not just around the mill but all through the community?

RM: Because the people all around worked in the mill and it really affected everything. There was a lot of bitterness and it changed and it's one of those things that is a real family quarrel because both sides are right sort of thing. The real issues are what I call conflict of loyalty. The great stories are rarely about good versus evil. There are some of those but it's almost always this kind of loyalty or allegiance versus that kind of allegiance. These mountain people had been so independent and they just hated the idea of forming a union. You know when

I went down there to get a job the union wouldn't ever give me a job and, of course, a cotton mill in those days was kind of a paternal organization.

DS: Yes, definitely.

RM: A family thing. The union was trying to modernize the area to make the people realize they should make more than sixty cents an hour, they should have more rights, they should have more benefits, and that was kind of new stuff. It was a real collision of cultures and it was inevitable, probably necessary, but things never seemed the same after those two events. I can remember we had a pickup truck, my dad. That was a big event for us getting a pickup truck. Going to the opening of the GE plant is like going into a futuristic world. It was like science fiction, assembly lines and electronic stuff and, you know, the loading docks and everything, a railroad spur came up to the plant.

DS: A trip to the World's Fair sort of.

RM: Exactly, it was like connecting. I mean we knew about that world that was out there, you know, in Cleveland and Dayton and places people worked in factories, that there were expressways and that kind of thing, but it hadn't touched us until then. Suddenly here was a real factory, electronics, not like the cotton mill.

DS: Right, not just mechanical but electronic.

RM: Un-huh, even then we understood the magic of electronics.

DS: So this community feeling has really, I mean the intensity of personal knowledge, family knowledge, generation after generation, that has receded dramatically and there are new people coming in I assume, new families, whole different.

RM: Well, the kids started going away to college and not coming back. That was a major thing. It was assumed that you would stay; you'd build a house on the family property. It never occurred to my parents that even when I went to college and wouldn't come back. They'd live and live with their parents and grandparents. That was a major change when the young people started taking jobs in other places, particularly going to college and having more and more and more. But even that was not as dramatic as retirees moving in and started buying and this mostly happened after I had left here. I left here in '71.

DS: Did the population decline there for a while as the younger people were moving out?

RM: It certainly wasn't growing rapidly but there was a period when the rest of the county was developing, Flat Rock and Lake Lure and the area over towards Asheville, but this end was not. This was the rural end of the county. Our schools were probably not considered as good as Hendersonville High, that sort of thing. I'm not sure that's so but I think that's exactly what.

DS: Some people refer to it still as the last frontier but sort of in a good sense that it's less developed than the other places.

RM: It has both sides.

DS: Right.

RM: People kind of romanticize it but I know lawyers and land surveyors, you know, dread having to deal with this end of the county because there are so many boundary disputes, people encroaching on each other, which is absolutely true. They do all the time. They will push trees over on your land or dump their garbage on your land. That happened while I was away. When I come back now all new houses, so much money, these big houses built on mountainsides and so many of them wanted to put their houses up on top of the mountain and on the side of the mountain where everybody can see it and the old timers never did that and the Indians never did that. They'd build a house down. Why put it up where you can't get spring water? That really has changed the look, the mountains, all of it just covered with houses. I personally don't feel good about that. I think they're going to destroy this place the way southern California is destroyed. I can remember many years ago being in Laguna Beach and it was the paradise that everybody wanted, blue ocean, white sand, some houses on the beach, the Spanish kind of architecture and the mountains, the coast range behind. Now if you go to Laguna Beach every foot has a house on it and the mountain behind it is covered with houses and that landscape has been ruined. So what's happening is what Americans always do. We destroy what we love most. You come to the mountains because you want to see the mountains and then you cover them up so you no longer, you know, you can look out but everybody has covered up the mountains and we just tend to do that. We don't know where to stop. That's my opinion. I think realtors would disagree probably.

DS: Well, they do. It reminds me, of course, we start talking about Daniel Boone we'll disappear from the Green River, but that story you were telling me I think the last time that we were together about when they were looking at the buffalo herds and thinking we'll never see anything like this again as they moved forward and destroyed it.

RM: Felix Walker said they knew when they looked down on the meadow beside the Kentucky River they were seeing all the buffaloes grazing and licking the ground around the salt lick that this was something that would disappear. They knew that already. He said we knew we were looking at a ( ).

DS: And this was what year?

RM: This was 1775.

DS: And we continue to say this as we run our houses up the side of the mountain.

RM: We don't know how to stop.

DS: So how would you describe or is there a way to describe the difference in the way that these new residents see the land or maybe they don't see the land or is there a different way that it's talked about? I mean maybe in terms of acreage and view shed as opposed to where you might trap or where you might fish or where there were baptisms done. Is there any way to talk about that?

RM: Well, I think you have to remember that each of the people moving in has their own story and they also come from somewhere, maybe out in Chicago or Boston.

DS: Florida.

RM: Florida. They have, you know, as many stories as we do. They each have family stories. They obviously move here because of the climate and the scenery and each of them is probably expecting or hoping for something slightly different from people, you know, just want to play golf. They want a place where they can play golf, ride horses, go to the community center and play bridge or have lots of cultural activities in Hendersonville. They obviously don't have any tie to the land, this particular land that goes back. The up side of it is they bring in money and lots of culture that simply wasn't here before though in terms of concerts and lectures and programs. You know, they pumped money into Blue Ridge College and things were just completely unknown when I lived here, certainly when I was a boy. Emerson said the law that rules everything is compensation and for every gain there's also a loss, and this is a perfect example of it. The change to a retirement community, gated community, golf courses, retirement centers, brings in a lot of jobs and certainly educational and cultural advantages that didn't exist here before but it also erodes the sense of the old community. And that's both good and bad too. There were lots of things about the old community that weren't good at all.

DS: Right and we tend to forget that.

RM: Family feuds and fear of the outside and fear of change and ignorance and prejudice. So I've never been the kind of person that thought, you know, the most important thing is to hold onto the old ways. As Earl Butts told Wendell Berry in a famous debate, I used to have to go to the outhouse in North Dakota when it was twenty below zero and I like indoor plumbing. (Laughter)

DS: Yes, I can see those all too well.

RM: I've plowed with a horse a lot and that's enjoyable but I like to plow with a tractor too. So I've always felt divided and I realize that most of my writing has been about that conflict of allegiances. I'm obviously deeply tied to this place, the land, the people, the community. At the same time I sought very much to escape it, to college, away.

DS: Upstate New York.

RM: Which is not all that different actually in some ways.

DS: That happens to us, doesn't it?

RM: It has a different history.

DS: We escape into where we were.

RM: Of course, the great dividing event, which we do like to forget and perhaps should as much as we can, is the Civil War. It's too bad if you try to keep fighting the Civil War but you can't ignore it either. You feel that if you know rural people in upstate New York, which I do, they are in many like the rural people I grew up in and yet they're not. That sense of difference, which is so complex. I've never been able to describe that, to tell you the truth, the knowledge that your ancestors were part of a rebellion that failed.

DS: I lived in rural Vermont and it was a similar sense.

RM: Similar, yeah, but the sense of identity is different, the sense of exclusion, having lost, being the failure. No matter what, you know that somebody died in a prison camp up north or came walking barefoot to Virginia in defeat.

DS: In my family it was always interpreted as a tragic failure, a noble failure. I mean we were somewhat grander and more gentlemanly and therefore we lost, but a definite sense of failure.

RM: I've heard southerners say, particularly upper class southerners, that they had gone to college before they realized the South lost the Civil War. (Laughter) That may be an exaggeration. After all we had all the great generals.

DS: That's right. I mean we must have won.

RM: Robert E. Lee, how could lose?

DS: That's right. That's right. My father certainly thought that.

RM: Well, and we were taught with a lot of truth the brutality of Sherman and Grant too. What if Lee when he marched into Pennsylvania had destroyed the countryside? They didn't destroy anything. They stole a little food and some shoes. Gentlemen do not win wars.

DS: No, no. So one other question just going back to the idea you can't and perhaps it's not desirable to keep things exactly as they were, but are their places in this community in the valley that you would like to see protected? I mean things that are still here that you would like to see protected or stay the way they are, or do you think about it that way?.

RM: Well, I would like to the natives to be able to continue to live here as they want. I can see that with the price of land constantly going up and taxes going up, every year my taxes are double for the little bit of land I own here. Eventually this will be almost entirely retirement

resort country and it makes me a little sad to see the agriculture disappearing. The apple orchards are going. You can't afford to have an apple orchard here. It's a high risk business and you can sell it for development and condominiums.

DS: Well, the predominant agriculture looks like it's nurseries at the moment and then it will I think go in the way you're saying.

RM: The truck farming is already gone. That was our money crop. We raised pole beans and bell peppers and eggplant and things, mostly pole beans. That's pretty much gone. That is so labor intensive. You have to have a family to do that kind of farming or you have to hire a work crew. And it's hard to expand unless you really have a crew of Mexicans or some labor force, so that whole way of life is pretty much gone here as in other places. The family farm can be kept but it has to be subsidized by wage work somewhere or salary work. Wendell Berry has been able to sustain his farming because he makes a lot of money from royalties and lectures and that sort of thing.

DS: Right, that's his wage work. He's not in the textile mill but he's, you know. Other people that you think I should talk to and I asked you this before and I wrote down a few, that are living in the community now.

RM: Almost everybody I knew growing up is dead. You should get the opinions of some of the people who've always lived here just to get a sense of the way these local people look at things and it can be very different and often surprising.

DS: Some Maybins I think and Capps.

RM: Maybins are good talkers and Capps. Certainly, do you know Theron? You probably know Theron.

DS: I've heard he's certainly somebody.

RM: The Maybins, that's probably the oldest family on this river, in this river valley. I'm not absolutely sure of that.

DS: The things I've read suggest that's true. They're up along Rock Creek?

RM: Right and what we call Mountain Valley. I don't know where the oldest Maybin house. I know where the oldest one I've ever seen the ruins are still there as you go above the church Mountain Valley and it's on the left. You know where the Camp, the old Camp house is? You ought to know the Camp house. That's a really old one and it's still there. It was lived in until very recently. ( ) lived there. That's another old family, German family, the Camps, almost as old as the Maybins. I think not quite as old. If I were you I would go up there and talk to Grace Maybin who's in her nineties. She the widow of this great song leader, Rollie Maybin. Now the greatest musician in this valley was his father, Ben Maybin, who held singing school.

This was way before my time but this tremendous musical talent in this family Maybin. Rollie inherited it and Rollie's sister married Duffy Corn and their son was Elmo Corn who's dead. You probably, he was a piano player and he never had a lesson in his life but I mean it was like hearing Fats Waller or something. He could play anything, hymns, absolutely had a gift. But Rollie, they actually have tapes of Rollie singing and leading singing. Grace would probably give you a tape of Rollie but she's a real person. She was married when she was fifteen and she and Rollie made a living when they were first married hewing crossties. They would hew two a day. He would hew one and she would hew one. Fifteen year old bride, that's the hardest work there is, chestnut logs, chop it down into perfect dimensions. But she's a pretty good talker. I used to go see her every Christmas. Far as I know she's still alive. She the mother of Henry Maybin and may be living with Henry up there on Maybin Road, which is just across from ( ) old house or with her son Rabun, R-A-B-U-N, Rabun. We used to call him Rabun Maybin, Raban Maybin.

DS: Well, that's very helpful.

RM: I would say your instincts are absolutely right, if you can get in with the Maybin family, Theron probably knows the most. The old generation are all gone. Faith is the last one. Lincoln had fourteen children. He was married to, his widow is still alive actually. Did you ever talk to Alfred Heatherly, worked for ( )?

DS: No, but I know.

RM: His son still lives just out here, Rudolph Heatherly.

DS: That's another family name that I.

RM: The Corns were Germans also like the Camps. Have lots of Rudolph's. Duffy Rudolph descended from John Peter Corn, the revolutionary soldier who had a family here. The wife died here, the family, many grown children moved to Georgia and married a younger woman and has lots of Corn descendents in Georgia. Alfred Corn, the poet, is a Georgia descendant. John Peter Corn, was old German family, but they seem like Germans, very good artisans, masonry, carving, anything mechanical.

DS: So would they have come up from South Carolina as well or did they come with that group of Germans that came from Pennsylvania down the trunk road and into the Piedmont?

RM: Almost certainly, yeah, all those German people came in from Pennsylvania, yeah.

DS: That's where my family came down from.

RM: The Great Wagon Road.

DS: Yeah.

RM: From Lancaster County, Philadelphia. Just one of the great secrets of American culture how many of those Germans there were and how important they were. They didn't keep

the sense of identity. They adapted themselves remarkably fast once they left the Pennsylvania area. Now if they were surrounded by Germans they kept speaking German. Once they got into Virginia and North Carolina and South Carolina they gave it up and might have been, who knows, Lutheran or Piatist or something, became Baptist and Methodists.

DS: Presbyterians.

RM: Presbyterians probably fit their temperament pretty well. Moravians kept their religion. I guess dr unkards are just Baptist, right? But they sure contributed a lot to the American character in my opinion, what we're so proud of, our get up and go. I've been to the British Isles and I've yet to see any get up and go. (Laughter) Boone's closest hunting companion early in Kentucky was Michael Stoner, Holsteiner, ( ) Michael Holsteiner. He was a short heavy guy, an absolute deadly marksman and totally dependable and with all the accounts the thing that these hunters really were honored for is their dependability. If you think about it you see why that's so. You know, there are lots of people who can shoot straight but when there were Indians prowling and outlaws in a wild country you had to have somebody if he said was going to meet you in two days at the fork of the river, it had to be somebody who would meet you in two days.

DS: Yeah, life and death. Well, this has been fascinating, Robert. I appreciate it very much.

RM: I love to talk about Green River and the old days. I wish my dad was still around. He really knew so much more than I do about the history of this region. Once you got him started it was that association when you remember Bowen Ward dying of periodicities and.

DS: It would remind him of something else.

RM: Somebody who got lost in the woods, just one story leading on to another on to another. He knew the geography of everything. He had been a trapper and so he was a real Daniel Boone type when he was young. He knew the Flatwoods. He knew the head of the river there, what we call the Big Place. He knew Grassy Creek over in Transylvania County and the Cedar Mountain area. He had hunted and trapped in there. Probably his favorite trapping area was the Long Hollow Big Spring, South Macon Gap area. That was really wild and there were lots of wildcats, foxes, and you could catch foxes. Now that's hard. Somebody brags to you about how easy it is to catch foxes you know he doesn't know anything.

DS: You'd be skeptical.

RM: There's a reason they've got the reputation they have.

DS: Cunning.

RM: ( ) all the folklore.

DS: Yes, way back. Tricksters.

RM: Wolves I guess could only be caught in pits. Indians were actually very good at that. They'd catch foxes and wolves both because they'd dig these pits and put a trap door over it like on a hinge and put some sort of bait and they'd step on it and drop into a hole six feet deep. You can catch them that way, wolf trap.

DS: It's hard. You have to, or at least I have to make myself think hard to imagine wolves in the area and buffaloes, which we talked about last time.

RM: They went early. They hunted out the buffaloes. This was not perfect buffalo country because there weren't enough meadows. Heavy forest isn't good buffalo country. I don't know about this immediate area but there were certainly buffaloes we know from eyewitness accounts on the Yadkin.

DS: More meadows down there.

RM: Yeah, it's a little bit more Savannah country. But it was why Kentucky had so many buffaloes because it was bluegrass and cane. The buffaloes just love these cane breaks because they would eat the leaves off the cane. They would eat the shoots when it was young. Kentucky was called the land of cane and clover very early.

DS: Buffalo knew this.

RM: They knew exactly what they were doing. They had these trails through the mountains here and Lawson saw them in the Yadkin Valley in 1720. He called it Saponi because they were a tribe of Indians, the Saponi, who lived on the Yadkin. Herd surveyed his line in 1729 and he saw some buffalo. By the time Boone got there in 1751 they were almost all gone, weren't entirely gone. He supposedly was hunting with the Cherokees. I probably told you that story.

DS: Un-huh, great story.

RM: The buffalo droppings and ( ).