Interview with Joseph Sargent Hall by Michael Montgomery, conducted in Oceanside, California, January 8, 1990.

[Note: inaudible words are represented by xx, proposed terms by ??]

M: Well, we won't pretend this is studio quality. This is kitchen quality here. Let me say at the beginning, today is January the eighth, nineteen ninety, and this is Michael Montgomery speaking, and I'm sitting in the dining room of Joseph Sargent Hall, in Oceanside, California. I am sitting here with Joe and would like to ask him a few questions about his life-long experience in recording and dealing with mountain speech going back to the nineteen thirties, particularly focusing on the techniques that he used and his impressions of the mountain people back in the thirties. These are important topics because Joe's records represent the earliest, or at least some of the earliest, and certainly one of the largest, collections of actual speech of mountain people anywhere in the Appalachians that we have since we have, because of his work, a good number of hours of speech from the late nineteen thirties and [the] forties for future generations. I'd like to begin by asking Joe how his research came about. What did the assignment, how did your assignment to the mountains come about, and your relationship with the National Park Service?

H: Well, I had a friend at Columbia [University]. He was in Geology, but somehow we were friends, and he was from Oklahoma, and he kept telling me about some of the quaint terms of the Ozarks. Well, about that time or sometime after, another friend of mine came up from Washington, D.C. This was Roy Appleman. He was in the Park Service as a historian, and I was, Roy asked me what I was doing for my dissertation. I said I hoped to do it on Oklahoma speech, to somehow get a job down there or be sent down there somehow. So Roy didn't say anything until about two weeks later. He wrote me a long letter. He was a historian in the Park Service and asked if I would be interested in making a similar study in the Great Smokies for a nominal salary. So that's the way it came about.

M: And that was in what, the spring or summer of nineteen thirty-seven?

H: Yes, uh-huh.

M: And if I'm not mistaken, you did some recording or you did some interviewing in that, that first year, the summer of nineteen thirty-seven, but no recording. Could you tell us a little bit about that?

H: There was a great deal of interviewing with xx folks in town, and my interviews were just as long then as they were in many cases with phonographic recording. The way I was, the way I was put in touch with people to interview, was that I'd go to the local CCC headquarters in Cades Cove, at Tremont and Cosby and Mount Sterling and the others, and usually the superintendent would know who would be a good talker and give me a good bit of information, and so with that advantage, it was easy to enlist information from so many people.

M: Well, how did you actually make contact with people, since they had no idea who you were when you first approached them, and they were not expecting someone to be, to be interested in recording or listening to them? How did, how did you make contact and convey the purposes of what you wanted to do?

H: Well, there was one case where I went to Bradley Fork near the Oconaluftee River [NC]. There was a woman in her eighties there who they said was a real laredo??, and so I said, when I approached her, "Missus So-and-So?", and she said, "Yeah, you see that there there? That's a can of worms, and you're not supposed to use them, but I use them anyway. I was a Rebel [in the Civil War] and I'm a Rebel yet." So pretty soon we got conversing, telling about her background, and so she just kind of answered xx. It helped me a great deal, and then the one interview would lead to another. She would tell about one of her relatives xx on the Oconaluftee River, so it was easy then to get our things together and to ...

M: So then you would approach the next person and use the name of the person that you had just interviewed?

H: Yes, that's right, and very soon in that area they would be talking about some unknown person coming in and representing our Park Services, and so I became known in that area in that way until with the result that in many cases of people that would expect me to come even when I didn't make it and would be a little offended if I didn't come.

M: I see, so it became something of an honor, or at least an expected social call.

H: Exactly.

M: Well, how would you characterize people's response? Were they suspicious or skeptical or curious? Did they ask questions about, about what you were doing and why you were doing it"

H: Well, not generally. It was just in Cosby [TN], where it was [a] disreputable liquor area.

M: Yeah, and that's had a reputation for a long time.

H: Yes, I believe, and in the past even connections with Chicago and gangsters like Dillenger xx he and some that had come down, and so it was more tentative when I came to Cosby, but I did a lot of interviewing before I went to Cosby. Let's see, the next place that I visited was at Cades Cove [TN].

M: After the Oconaluftee?

H: That's right, yeah, and the fire warden at Cades Cove was an old inhabitant and was another guide at Cades Cove then, and he would, helped out the Park Service by taking men to the people who would help him with particular questions and problems, and he was a real wonderful guy, and he took me gladly. I didn't even have a car or a truck, and he would take me in his Park Service truck to the homes of people, and since he knew the people well, it was easy for me to get acquainted with them. For example, he had a brother, Sherman Myers. His name was Rick Myers, no, it's James, but his cousin was Sherman. He was quite a, quite a jokester, would tell a lot of stories on, on people, and he and his wife took me out on a picnic to the site of their old home, and it wan an interesting, pleasant occasion. One of the, one of the things I've heard of Missus say [was] "you would think a bear had been there a-wallowing around in that strawberry patch ... "

M: Do you mean the, all the strawberries were crushed or they were or they were all gone?

H: Well, they, the vines were all mashed down, but one of the, and one of the men, an older inhabitant that he didn't want to take me to, was John Oliver, who had put up such a big fight against the National Park Service, and then the first days of the Park was people visiting there with

signs, and I was telling them within one mile of a sign.

M: You mean don't come within one mile of a sign?

H: Uh-huh, something like that, of wanting people to stay away, but later on, a couple of years later, I, he was glad to see me. [He] had been a mail carrier then in the Park, so he knew just about everybody there. He was laughing a little bit about his escapades with the Park Service at that time, and also, they had also paid him a pretty good sum for his old place, twenty-five thousand dollars, which was a lot of money in those days.

M: I would think so, back during the Depression especially.

H: Yes.

M: And they let him live there until he passed on?

H: Yes, and so many other cases the same.

M: Yes, that's a lot of money for him to find something to do with. So you, so you spent several weeks in Cades Cove?

H: Yes, I spent about two or three weeks in Cades Cove.

M: And then where did you go from there?

H: Well, I spent time with the Park Naturalist, a clerk, a real fine guy named xx and the Park Service biologist asked Glenn Shults if we could stay with his family for a couple of weeks, and that was a wonderful way to get acquainted with people around and inquired about things, words and expressions.

M: This is which area of the Park now?

H: This is, that was in Emerts Cove, and I got to know a good many people around there, some, the Shults family and others of the Shults family and even a friend of the Shults who was making liquor, and later on I recorded him even though he didn't want for me to take his name. It was two years later that I recorded him, but I'd met and talked with him and become friends with him during that first summer in nineteen thirty-seven. I asked one gentleman that I later recorded if people liked the coming of the National Park. He said he really didn't like it so well, and I asked him why. He said, "well, other than they received money in return for their land, they wouldn't know what to spend or to invest it in a thing that they couldn't pay for it, some of those that got it in payments.

M: I remember hearing something that, a couple of stories like that in Jefferson County [TN].

H: Jefferson, yeah, that there were people there whose land had been bought out, and they moved down into the lowlands and, you know, they had bought unwisely and hadn't been able to maintain the payments, and I know there were a couple of people I've heard of that were in that situation, but they were bought out by TVA in the nick of time. They lost their land in the Smokies and bought some of the bottomland that was later used for, you know, the Douglas Reservoir, and they got paid for that before they went under, for the reason that you just said and ...

M: But were people, did people ask questions about, about what you were doing? Were you the first person who they had ever seen with a, with a tape recorder? [Editor's note: Hall was using a disk recorder, not a tape recorder.]

H: Probably. Well, all of the people I visited and interviewed, I'm sure that the tape recorder was new to them. When I, later on when I was recording at a dance at the Masonic Hall in Waynesville, and it was a tremendous hall, and it was xx Faith Creek, a dance on New Year's Eve, one boy came up and said "well, what do you got there? what kind of a play pretty is that there?"

M: What kind of a toy.

H: Yeah, and he was quite fascinated by it, among other things.

M: Well, what did the recorder look like? You had a, an aluminum disk recorder originally?

H: I, I had two. I had an aluminum disk recorder with which you could use a battery, and I'd put the battery in the truck, and so I had that by that time and have people sit near the truck within a distance, within a convenient distance of the reel of the disk recorder, and that was, and this was in the summertime, so it was rather pleasant to record out in the open area, since there would be many opportunities by that time to record with, also with electricity. I had a second recorder, which made acetate disks, which I thought I would use primarily for the music, for the ballads and mountain songs and string band music, which played such an important part in their dances, and I recorded a number of live square dances in Bryson City and in the Masonic Halls, as I mentioned, and a big square dance going at Mount Sterling sponsored by the Barnes family. The Barnes family there are important in that area. Tom Barnes has been a man of considerable note, and his son became a sheriff for a lumber company that was working in there. He was a deputy sheriff, and he knew everybody. They lived in a comfortable home, two stories, the purchase of which was undoubtedly made possible by the xx Barnes by their job. Well, his son, Lawson Barnes, was the, an attorney in Knoxville, and Lawson and his wife were very xx and invited me to come to their dance, and they took me on picnics, so I recorded them. Mostly it was, was Barnes and Lawson Barnes in considerable detail and recorded all through the square dance. The square [dances] got kind of wild at times when everybody was drinking mountain juice, mountain dew.

M: Well, how late into the night, into the night would they go?

H: Well, my friend, one of the Metcalfs, said they quit about midnight maybe. I think some of the square dances they made unusually long just to xx turned up there.

M: Well, I want to ask you whether you sat with any of the mountain dew or whatever term the mountaineers had for there are some pretty descriptive terms in doing some of my own fieldwork up there, in addition to "mountain dew" and xx.

H: Oh, I had no part of it. I had no part of it, so ...

M: Well, it's strong stuff. Can you tell us about, what, what was the tape recorder like? Was it round, and the battery that you kept in the truck, how big and how heavy was it?

H: Well, it would just be about two feet square and a foot high.

M: And that must have weighed thirty pounds or so.

H: Yes, just about. After, just after xx my services with the tape recorder, this other girl was very interested in buying it. She was going to Africa to record the natives there in connection with her duties as a missionary. You were asking about the areas where they made the moonshine xx along there. The National Park Service referred me to another person who lived in the Del Rio area xx the house of Stewart Ramsey, Stewart Ramsey unfortunately died xx, but his widow still had their home, and she was a very intelligent person, very nice person, and she had some children very helpful to me, so they, the boy took me to his friends in the area, and his friends, they made moonshine.

M: And what part of the Park area was this?

H: Cosby, and so this boy would go right xx. In one case there was a little bit of ill feeling, was one little fellow here who didn't know what I was doing, who didn't understand what I was doing, was about to start a fight with me, but my, but my old friend Gus Benson jumped in and said, "Don't you touch him, don't touch him," so that's the kind of help that I got. So I could journey up and down the creek all with the help of the natives, especially with Gus Benson, and then much, much later with Levi Webb, who was related to the Ramseys. Levi Webb was the one that served some time in prison xx sentence, so he knew everybody, and they trusted him.

M: I remember reading in a book about moonshining at Cocke County. I reckon that part of the country in particular was viewed as one of the moonshining capitals of the country during the Prohibition Era, and I've heard more than one person from there say that that's, that's the only thing that the people could do to support themselves. The land was so poor and rocky and so on, at least that's the account that the local people gave, you know. Maybe it was a good deal easier to do that and to scratch out a few crops as well.

H: Well, actually many of the people [were] very poor on some fine land, but because it was owned by big landowners. Now the one, well, one landowner was a very fine gentleman, Reuben Williamson. Later on I questioned him about the superstitious things, beliefs of the area, and he was quite open in telling me some of the experiences people had. For example, he's told me how some men were bringing a load of liquor from the North Carolina side, you know, coming down the trail on the Cosby side and saw a great big ball of fire sail through the air and come down, rest on the ground and take the shape of a soldier. So somebody exclaimed "why, that's a United States man [who?] escaped there to the mountains."

M: Like the sighting of a UFO, huh?

H: Yes.

M: Like a Close Encounter of a Third Kind?

H: Yes.

M: Did people, did people ever inquire about what you were doing? I'm getting back to a question I asked earlier, and if so, were they sympathetic? You were, you were, you were hired by the Park, if I'm not mistaken, to make a record of mountain culture to document the lives of the natives there. Were the people that you interviewed asked about this? Were they aware of this, and did this play a role in their willingness to be interviewed?

H: Well, at first I didn't feel that I could tell them that I was studying their speech, because then I

thought they would clam up right away. So I told them I was just inv-, trying to come up with stories of the area, accounts of how people lived or where they went to mill, what kinds of flour were produced at the mill, and what were remedies of the women. So that's in general what I did, but later on, on my second visit ...

M: And this was, this was ...

H: Nineteen thirty-nine.

M: Nineteen thirty-nine, when you began recording?

H: I was much more open about what I was doing, and they were in general just as cooperative, some of my friends didn't want to be memorialized in that age, so they didn't record, some of my best friends.

M: I see. They just said "no," huh?

H: Yes, well, that was true to the Messers, xx. One of my friends went on fishing and hunting trips with xx Messer and his brother Brown Messer was quite a source of information, even recently, at the time, and then on the same visit I was taken, and I came to xx with the Metcalfs xx. The Metcalfs had been in the three C's. When he saw my recorder, why he and several of the three C's xx sang in a quartet for me, singing in a quartet, and so Wilford was much intrigued by the recorder and went on a number of trips with me, guiding me in my pick-up, and he's been a friend ever since then. I called him just the other night to see how his family was getting along.

M: That's a friendship of more than fifty years now.

H: Yes, it is.

M: Do people ever want to hear themselves?

H: Yes, I'd play it back in just about all cases.

M: Is that right?

H: Yeah, in fact, some would ask for a recording for themselves. Mark Cathey [did], when I was at Bryson City, did Deep Creek asked for copies of the recording, I sent him not a complete copy because that would have been six or eight sides of the records, but he said he was satisfied with the one ten-inch record I sent him on both sides. Later on his family was much interested in the recordings and tapes at Gatlinburg, at the library of the Sugarlands there, and when they heard Mark Cathey talk, they said "now that's just like him."

M: Yes, yes, well, it was, it's very special, I'm sure, to have a grandfather or relative on tape that you'd like to remember.

H: Yes.

M: Well, I'm going to pause here to check if the recording is working as planned. Just one second. I would be glad to send a copy of this along to you and the Library of Congress.

H: Yes, it's a very good interview xx.

M: Well, thank you, I certainly try, when you interviewed people, did you have a sort of a special approach or standard questions that you would ask?

H: No, in general just what their name and maybe any, very often any of their ancestors, as far as they knew them. Some people would say "well, my foreparents came from Pennsylvania."

M: In general, how aware were people of their ancestors, did they have much ... ?

H: Oh, very much so, a lot of them had their ancestry recorded in the family Bible.

M: And that went back into Revolutionary times?

H: Oh yes, many cases it would go back to the seventeen hundreds. I have some notes I'd like to show you about that.

M: I'd like to see them. Do they talk about what the Old World, ancestry-wise, whether it was the, you know, from Ireland or Germany, you know, or England or where they were at?

H: Yes, for example, Margaret xx, one of her ancestors was a xx, mentioned the Dutch, meaning Germans, a number of people did that.

M: xx you mentioned Shults and you mentioned Myers, and there were some other German names there, and so they were obviously. A name like Ramsey would probably be Scotch-Irish [H: Exactly right], Ramsey in there as well, and we did. I'm particularly interested, as you know, in the Irish connection. What did they say about that that you remember? Did they talk about Scotland at all, or just about Ireland?

H: It couldn't be xx. It didn't go back that far. They would say their family came from across the waters. This was the standard expression. "They came across the waters."

M: I see.

H: So nothing going further back.

M: I see, I see. Well that fits in to the historians' concept about the Scotch-Irish losing an awareness of their identity, you know, that they really didn't represent a nationality after about one or two generations in this country by the end of the eighteenth, and I, and to some extent the people known as the Scotch-Irish were, sort of received an identification in the mid-nineteenth century, when all of the southern Irish, the Catholic Irish, the Catholic[s] had started coming over, and the Irish who had come earlier wanted to be sure to make a distinction between the Protestant Irish and the Catholic Irish, you see. There are the Scotch-Irish, sometimes the Germans used the "mere Irish," you know, but that distinction between those two different groups of immigrants goes back only about a hundred and fifty years, and the awareness of Scotch-Irishness really goes back that far as well, let me see, I wanted to ask you as well about what ideas you had about the influence of the microphone, you didn't, you said you [did] not have a microphone in the, in your earliest interviews, in nineteen thirty-seven?

H: No.

M: But you did in nineteen thirty-nine and in nineteen forty, and so you must have talked to some of the same people those two times. Can you say something about how, how the microphone,, you think, affected people's speech?

H: It didn't affect them very much if they were good talkers. If they weren't good talkers, why, the information that would come from was very difficult, and the young fellow who was making booze in Emerts Cove got a little bit of tangled in his sentence structure, you know, and we figured out it was because he was so, so leery of telling about it, because it was his profession. So if people weren't really good talkers at all, there was a good deal of hemming and hawing, and they would stutter, but in general I was able to contact people who were, that were good talkers, like, like certain people in Emerts Cove xx their names right xx, so I started recording in front of them and Williamson in Cosby and others all, all over the Smokies.

M: Did you get any sense at all that people were screening their language? I ask because I was reading your notes on grammar and for instance, that the forms like "hisn" and "hern" and "yourn" were common in mountain speech, but they did not occur on your, on your recordings. You must have had notes about them in your field notes, but they did not actually occur in your recordings, and I'm wondering whether that or, or that represented the fact that people were so, were somehow screening the language in that case or maybe in some other cases as well.

H: Only to very minor extents, I would think. Also now they were independent people who didn't care what people thought about their speech, which was the right attitude.

M: Now in men as well as women, you think?

H: Yes.

M: Do you think women might have been a little more self-conscious?

H: Well, the women might, but I think they listen so much in general that they were pretty good talkers. For example, Missus Will Palmer in Cataloochee had been a teacher before she became married, so teachers are usually good talkers. So she gave me information willingly into the microphone, and then, of course, Mark Cathey, the bear hunter, was a pretty xx that talked on and on about one bear hunt after another.

M: Yeah, and those are very fast-paced stories. It's easy to see how he could lose any awareness of the grammatical forms or whatever in the pace of the story. Were women as easy to interview as men, as easy to make contacts with and ...

H: Oh yes, because I'd get them started on the remedies, and that would take them back into family situations.

M: Uh-huh, uh-huh, that was the key topic, home remedies.

H: Yes, they'd tell about one thing after another, like what snakeroot was and how to break fever and make a poultice out of the, out of onions for your breast, and they used "breast" for both men and women xx, but they talked very readily about their remedies, and I was glad to get the information about the different kinds of flour from an Oconaluftee woman, who said the first flour was the xx, where the second best-seller was, for the next best flour was the seconds.

M: The seconds?

H: The seconds, yeah, she said that they made good pancakes and then the white flour for wheat bread.

M: The finer flour for the wheat bread, uh-huh. We were talking I believe it was yesterday about, I think I'd commented about the disparity of interviews, the fact that there were many more interviews with men than women, and we were talking a little bit about some of the reasons for that. I wanted to see if maybe we could talk about that a little more and get that on tape. What were some of the reasons for even, even the women could, when [they] talked about, with the home remedies there, it still was a relative lack of women that you interviewed?

H: That's true, partly because when I went into a house, a woman's, the women just stayed in the background in most cases. They hardly ever appeared, in just a few cases, why, they'd be more anxious to tell their stories too. I think I was referred to people because of the men [that] knew the local, I mean the men of the Park Service knew the local men pretty well. Very often, why, the local men would be hired by the Park Service to do particular tasks. For example, Aden Carver of Bradley Fork on our Oconaluftee River built about, was hired by the National Park Service to superintend the building of a mill, the rebuilding of a mill, and so he told later about his experience in building, went back into his religious life telling about when he was in Tennessee building a church, [that] some of the liquor makers destroyed his plants, scattered them all over or destroyed them, and he wanted to say too that there was at one time when all people that thought the same thing and said the same thing ...

M: I remember reading, you were saying that people were as good as their word.

H: Yes.

M: And people could be trusted to follow their word.

H: Yes.

M: Once they gave it.

H: I believe it was Aden Carver. This man was also a preacher in a local Oconaluftee Baptist church.

M: Even, even at his age, he was in his nineties, I think.

H: Yes, I met him on my first visit, and he was ninety-three on the second.

M: To some extent I reckon the, to go back to the women, go back to the fact that you were interviewing. The hunting stories, is that true, were they easiest to elicit as well, and in fact women, women never went on hunts, I gathered, or participated in the other outdoor activities that you asked about.

H: Well, for one thing the hunters in general are bold, bold people, bold in hunting and bold in speaking, and quite often I deferred to them because they were good talkers, whereas, whereas the women were in the background. The only case that I recall, with exception of a couple, but this is on Hazel Creek was where Bert Crisp first told about his experience just on the mountains and storms, and sometimes when the clouds covered the earth on the top of Smoky, you could just look out at all

the clouds and also would stay up there day and night in a snowstorm, and their whiskers would freeze, and he told about the man who'd herd his cattle on top of Smoky when the snowstorm came along and froze the cattle.

M: What was that, forty or fifty cattle [H: Yes], is that what the story was?

H: All the cattle were huddled together. Well this xx told very clearly now, the first sewing that she had done.

End of Side One

Side Two

M: ... winter nights.

H: And so she made sheets and pillow cases, and when she told about it, I said "well, how about Christmas in the mountains," I xx she thought that was a wonderful time of year when the women would bake cakes and put holly and holly berries around the place to decorate them.

M: Did people observe Old Christmas? Did they talk about that at all?

H: It was mentioned a few times.

M: Was it something that had passed out of fashion or ... ?

H: Yes, I think that the old customs had been forgotten pretty much. In the old days well I guess Old Christmas was the important day for the Christmas observance.

M: You did record a number of women singing, however, but just the few songs that I have heard of, I believe, are entirely by women. How did you go about eliciting songs. Were people as at ease in doing that as they were being interviewed?

H: Oh yes, the people who sing, musicians in general are willing to share their art with others, also now learned about singing groups in the course of a visit where, where if I was uh, [someone would say] "my daughter sings, I could be recording her with some of her friends."

M: They didn't expect you to be an agent, did they?

H: No [laughs].

M: They didn't expect you to take the recording down to Nashville or something, where uh ...

H: Well, later on the Williams family in xx North Carolina hoped I would take their recordings to Hollywood.

M: To Hollywood?

H: They'd made up a lot of recordings for me, and they worked hard at it, and Teague Williams said "well, Joe, you know people out there, why don't you take these recordings there?" but unfortunately, I, I never did, but they surely expected to, that their music, it would be, it would be

known and available.

M: But to your knowledge there was a, there was still a fair amount of the, of the singing of the old ballads, the last hurrah?

H: Oh yes, that was uh xx of the, it was Little Cataloochee, that sang quite a number of ballads, the Little River song and the Pretty Polly and the ...

M: What kind of social events or family events would feature songs like that. I mean hymns would obviously be sung at, at revivals and other easy-to-recognize events, but what would be the contexts when these, some of the older songs would be, would be sung in the community?

H: Well, family gatherings ordinarily, but also at church meetings.

M: Even though they were secular songs?

H: Well, that was the religious songs, but for the ...

M: Like the, the Barbara Allen and that kind of songs?

H: [That was] especially in family groups and would hear pretty soon the group would have a singing xx had a nice voice and great stories of songs just like the ones that you mentioned.

M: So they would be joined in, they would not be sung by a soloist, by, by one individual typically in a family gathering?

H: Oh yes, the old English ballads or Scottish ballads, all, all of those would be sung individually. I don't remember of hearing of, any of those being sung like the religious songs. When the religious songs were sung, there was parts and there would be a soprano and alto and a tenor and bass, well soprano and alto anyway.

M: You mentioned something a little while back about not telling people at first what you were doing, and that was that you had an interest in the language, and I remember you, you say in at least one place, you had written in at least one place that, that mountain people were, seemed to be very self-conscious about their language, why was this so? Why, why were mountain people self-conscious about their language and about themselves, and did they ever comment on the language?

H: Yes, Jim Lawson of Cades Cove had been a teacher in the area, and I think their self-consciousness came about when, for example, xx Methodist bishop would be coming to visit this church, and there would be quite a difference in the, with the English spoken, and Jim Lawson referred to it as the "mountaineer awkwardly speaking." He used the term over, and in talking to him, and he could speak the languages as well as the rest of them.

M: So it was primarily the people who had some contact with outsiders?

H: Yes, and they practically all did have contact with outsiders.

M: By that time.

H: Well, at all times somebody had to go to town and to the bank, and whole families would go to

town when taking a load of apples or chickens or whatever.

M: I see.

H: If they were around Knoxville, they would take them to part of the city where mountain vendors would come.

M: Yes, they probably took them to Market Street [H: That's right], the old farmers' market just one block west of Gay Street right there.

H: Yes.

M: Yeah.

H: Well, the family was there, sometimes just one or two people would be sent to town to get salt or coffee or whatever was needed. I take it that, that the family enjoyed getting out meeting people and seeing what the world really was like.

M: But what you're saying is they're all very conscious of how conspicuous they were.

H: Well, I think that it amounts to that, yes.

M: You didn't get the impression, did you, that they had already been visited by the other researchers who were, who had some very unfair images of them, who had some stereotypical views of, about the people?

H: I wasn't conscious of any case like that. Now a place like Cades Cove was only about fifteen or twenty miles from Maryville. I'm sure that Cades Cove had been studied till death on it with people coming up and interviewing the people.

M: Well, I'm sure they were aware, you know, especially with some of the early naturalists coming in.

H: Exactly.

M: It was such a wonderland that, of the flora especially there, but it makes you wonder as well whether, when Horace Kephart in *Our Southern Highlanders* has a rather memorable episode where he, he shows a local mountain fellow a story. I feel like maybe it was one of John Fox's novels in which mountain speech is represented in the dialogue, and this fellow, Kephart shows it to him, and he's very perplexed. He looks at it and he finally decides that it's not English. He doesn't know what it is, but it isn't his way of talking, and it isn't English, so he, the other, the other possibility, another possibility is that the mountain people were aware, and they thought they had been misrepresented, you know. They were viewed in a very unfair, stereotypical light by outsiders.

H: Well, that's, that's certainly true. For example, practically all of the kids, if they could read at home, have read stories about the mountain people that appeared in the newspapers. For example, Jim Ellison of Cades Cove had read about everything that had come out of, about the Smokies of various writers, and I think that he or somebody else said that he didn't like Kephart because Kephart downgrades the mountain people too much, and he said that the author of, well one of the current books bout the Smokies about nineteen thirty, he said, well, he's the best of them in

representing mountain speech, but he makes a lot of mistakes.

M: Uh-huh, so they, obviously they were pretty sensitive about that.

H: Yes, and ...

M: Well, they certainly are today. I mean there's a lot, a lot of defensiveness in that part of the country because of the media image. There's a sort of a northeastern city image of Appalachia as a terribly backward place.

H: I didn't think that's true, and that was one reason why women were a little more difficult to interview than men. Men get to a stage where they don't care what people think about their speech, but the women can be more reticent, so that was one reason why.

M: Especially the older men would have, tend to have fewer inhibitions, you know.

H: Exactly, yes.

M: Well, that's, I think that's true down the line.

H: Otherwise.

M: Of the social ladder as well. Men have less concern about being, being correct in their behavior and being, you know, following the proper etiquette and that sort of thing and less concerned than their female counterparts. You had a number of people read the "Arthur the Rat" passage as well. How do, how did that play a role in your research?

H: Well, in the journal *American Speech*, the magazine that carried phonetic transcriptions of Arthur the Rat read by xx and ...

M: For various places in the country.

H: Yes.

M: I see. I remember that now.

H: Especially in the South and oh places like Bermuda and also it, the transcripts into, to the speeches by the Presidents or some kind of a person, but also the Rat story was, was a way to compare the speech of one person with that of another, as far as the pronunciation went, and that was one of the things that was on my mind the most was the phonetics of the speech.

M: So that was to provide some comparable data for your dissert- uh dissertation.

H: That's right.

M: So you could compare to different groups of people who were ...

H: It uh the story was such that people could get interested in it right away.

M: Uh-huh, uh-huh, I've always been intrigued by that story, did people, let's see how to put this, did

people ...

H: Ask where it came from.

M: Well, that too, but did they, did they get, did they relate to the story as one which they, they might have told or one they might have heard? I ask that because when I first read the story, it struck me as a, as an unusual story in some of its phraseology and so on. It didn't sound like a typical story to me, I can't put my finger on why.

H: Oh, I know why, because it's a, it was a, uh it first appeared, I believe, I think that Daniel Jones, the British linguist, I believe that he, I believe that he had concocted the story.

M: I believe, I believe that that probably was one thing that, it was written in sort of a British style.

H: Well, yes, that certainly was one thing. At first it was called Grip the Rat, and I didn't like Grip at all, and I, so I changed it to Arthur, which could come out as "Au-thur" or "Ar-ter" or what not.

M: Uh-huh, was that your innovation?

H: Yeah.

M: Because I've heard, I've heard Arthur the Rat in many, in a number of other contexts.

H: Yes,

M: Some people got that from you.

H: Yeah, that's right, yes, Grip seemed so colorless, and that xx add to the speech differences here.

M: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

H: I think despite the British phraseology people related to it because it, it brought up a kind of a Chris Critter to places which could xx told a story about a storm coming and starting in a place where the rats lived, and some of them could see the point of it right away, whereas others were less desirous to change their abode even with the threat at hand.

M: Well, those are about all the questions I had on your interviewing, but I wanted to ask you at this point if there are any other things that you would like to put on the record, so to speak, or that you would like to say about your experiences in general?

H: Well, I felt high honor in the first place. I, my friend In the Park Service that had singled me out to go down there as historian/student technician in the summer of nineteen thirty seven, and I felt that honored again in nineteen thirty-nine when the Park Service combined with the, with Columbia University in sending me down there, and I was glad to see that the National Park Service had appreciated that, I was shown by several letters that I've got from Park Service people, especially those concerned with the history, and I was glad to make a collection which would be available for scholars for years to come and to recover some idea of how people lived in this particular section, so beautiful and so productive in many ways and with people so strong in character and women carrying their part with other women. I think this was an important thing to transmit to the, to the future beside saving the regular speech of the people who were soon to die or

have to leave the area because the Park had purchased lands, six hundred thousand acres, I believe, which is quite a displacement of people, and I was interested in music most of my life, so it was easy to record and study the ballads and folk songs, and I've also had some professional xx background in that. I studied at UCLA with Sigrid and xx, who was a primary ballad scholar at that time, about nineteen forty-five to nineteen fifty, and in the ballads there was a great tradition there set by Cecil Sharp, this fellow from, the musicologist from England who covered this same country and collected the folk songs, and in many cases he must have recorded people that sang for him some of the places I was in, places that he had visited like Gatlinburg, Tennessee, and Hot Springs, North Carolina, which is not too far off.

M: That's in Haywood County?

H: No, it's in Madison County.

M: Madison County.

H: Well, all of those advantages to me besides the making of friends who would be my friends the rest of my life. The Williams family of White Oak, well, of Waynesville in North Carolina, are still my friends, and Brown Messer from the same area is still a very good friend, and Wilford Metcalf, and Miss Sally of Del Rio, Tennessee, has been a staunch friend helping many years. These people knew exactly what I was doing, and while I couldn't record the Messers, well they gave me plenty of information. When I recorded the Metcalf family, they were really glad to talk and not too reticent, but their friendship was really a very important treasure for me, friendship with all of them, what a wonderful opinion of the Smokies people, and they're not all the same. Some of them were very ambitious. For example, the Ramsey family, [Veenie??] Ramsey and her daughter xx Ramsey, she went to nursing school and became a registered nurse, and Wilford Metcalf had been able to invest his money for a pretty steady income now, and likewise with the Williams family. They live in Waynesville just like everybody else. Nobody would be singled out by his mountain origin, of course, because everybody talked the same language practically.

M: Well, speaking as a student of your own, I can certainly attest to how strongly you present the mountaineers in a way contrary to much of the popular image, the mountaineers often presented as a careless and lazy and shiftless individual who is just barely able to survive and provide for himself and his family from year to year. In fact, they are an extraordinarily ingenious people who are schooled in the wild, and they're able to survive against, in many cases, great odds where lots of other people could not and then carried that on into later generations, as you've indicated. They really are [an] extraordinary group of people who deserve a great deal of admiration.

H: Oh, I certainly do think so, and as for the attitude of some writers that these people are all alike, [that] is a ridiculous notion, just as, just like people who live around us. They're just normal people, some ambitious and hard-working, others taking it a bit easier, and a few at the bottom of the pile being completely shiftless, but that number is relatively small, at least in my experience, and my experiences are fairly wide at this time since it involves, what, how many years, thirty-seven to ninety? well over fifty years of my life.

M: So just to put this on record, you spent what? the summer of thirty-seven there?

H: That's right.

M: And six months in thirty-nine?

H: Seven months.

M: Seven months?

H: Yes.

M: And then the summer of nineteen forty and then ...

H: That's right.

M: And part of nineteen forty-one.

H: Yes.

M: And then, and then after that, what were the years, the periods that you spent?

H: Well then the World War came along, and I was in the service for almost four years, and so I visited the mountains, the Metcalfs, while I was in the service. I spent a good part of my furlough there, and while I was teaching at Brooklyn College, my friend Wilford Metcalf, was working in New Jersey, as were many of the mountain people at the time, and it was, when my summer vacation began, I told them I was going down to the mountains, so they said okay, so we'll go together. We had a little car that we drove from Tennessee down, from Jersey to Tennessee xx some visits in the summer of forty-nine, and I took quite a few notes at that time but didn't record until nineteen fifty-three. I rented a recorder in Waynesville and was able to record a long recording with Granville Calhoun, was Calhoun a pretty good Irish name, I guess?

M: That's right, absolutely.

H: And he was related to John Calhoun, wasn't he?

M: He might, might well have been.

H: Oh yeah.

M: I think he might have been.

H: Without a doubt. They are both from South Carolina, aren't they?

M: They are. I'm trying to think. I'm trying to remember if that's an Irish name or maybe it's a French Huguenot name. You know, there were some Huguenots early in that part of the country, John Sevier, the first Governor of Tennessee.

H: Is that right?

M: Or was a Huguenot, of Huguenot expansion?

H: And the Stinnett family of Emerts Cove.

M: Oh, is that right?

H: Yes, and there's quite a number of French names in the area.

M: So that was the summer of fifty-three?

H: Yeah.

M: You interviewed Calhoun and several other people?

H: And the Plotts. They had developed the famous bear hound, the Plott dog, the Plott hound, and they were, they had, two of the Plotts, John and Vaughn, they had kennels with a particular breed of a bear hound, and the Plotts had gone to a number of places with hunters to go show them how to hunt, They had been to Northern Michigan, and they had also been to eastern Carolina doing the same thing.

M: Uh-huh.

H: Well, Granville Calhoun had an old country store on Hazel Creek when the lumber companies had started coming in at about nineteen hundred or nineteen ten, and very soon he was doing an enormous business with the, with the lumber companies and two or three hundred men they were bringing into the area in order to log, but when he sold out to the Park, he said that he had a hundred fifty thousand dollars worth of goods on him. Well then he bought a hotel.

M: That's a fortune.

H: Pardon.

M: That was a fortune

H: A terrific fortune, yes, so he bought a hotel in Bryson City, which would be named the Calhoun Hotel, which he and his son ran for a time.

M: And you went back as well in nineteen fifty-six, I think.

H: Oh yeah.

M: And you, did you spend the entire time there?

H: The entire summer, yes.

M: Because it seems you have a number of uh ...

H: Recordings.

M: Of recordings and transcripts from that period.

H: Yes, I left, I left Los Angeles in my rickety car on June fifteenth, and we stayed there till the end of August, so with a, with my car and tape recorders, I went from place to place doing the same thing, in many cases recording the people of whom I had recorded earlier who by this time were less reluctant to talk.

M: Uh-huh, uh-huh, so you did have some follow-up interviews with some of the same people you had talked to sixteen, seventeen years earlier?

H: That's right, yes.

M: It might be interesting to compare their speech over those to see if it had changed over those years.

H: You're right.

M: Find some enterprising linguist to come along, a very interesting study, and then you spent a good bit of nineteen fifty-nine, I think, recording.

H: That's right.

M: Is that?

H: Yes, and nineteen and sixty-two and nineteen and sixty-seven and nineteen seventy-six.

M: Uh-huh.

H: There might have been another time when I was there, which I wouldn't have remembered only from the interviews and recordings.

M: Uh-huh, so you had a continuing acquaintance over all those years with the Smokies people, and that goes back, what, say fifty, fifty-three years now, nineteen thirty-seven. I had one other question that I did not ask. I just, just for the record, I wanted to ask you about how you made field notes, the kinds of procedures did you used, just the technical aspects. Did you make a lot of mental notes and then spend an hour every night writing down your observations, or did you take a lot of notes at the time?

H: I took notes.

M: On the spot?

H: Right on the spot [M: or what?], right there along with the person being interviewed, and so the bulk of the field notes were somewhat obtained in that way. I filled up at first small notebooks, and then when those weren't big enough, I used secretarial-sized notebooks, and finally I just used ordinary loose-leaf pages.

M: And that includes phonetic transcriptions as well as all sorts of other notations?

H: Yes, and then later in the field notes there was a great deal of secondary source information and some information about, about the mountaineers on their way of talking and oral history, as in the case of Black Dutch. It was told to me that two or three places like Byrd's Center and Fox Center were centers where the Black Dutch had settled. About all that was known about them was that they were small, dark people.

M: Did you see them yourself. Did you see any people known as Black Dutch yourself?

H: No, when the articles appeared in the local paper about that time, they were giving the backgrounds as Black Dutch, but I couldn't see anybody who would fit into the characterization.

M: So they were smaller in stature and had black hair?

H: And darker features.

M: And darker skin.

H: That's what was said to me. Now for example, Fox said that his area was known as the Dutch Center xx and other people roundabout. It was pretty hard for me to identify it.

M: And exactly where is this area now?

H: Well, it's uh ...

M: The, the Fox center.

H: It's near Sevierville. It's between Sevierville, just below Sevierville on your way to Knoxville.

M: Oh, I see, I see now, on the Knoxville side of Sevierville.

H: Yes.

M: And there is a community or neighborhood of people there?

H: Yes.

M: I wonder if, whether, have you heard of the Melungeons?

H: Yes.

M: They live on up the way in Hawkins and Hancock County. It's at Newman's Ridge, and they are, it seems, fairly clearly to be a tri-racial group, to have some black blood as well as Indian blood and Caucasian as well, you know, so they, from an early period, and so they were ostracized from all, all three groups, to live in, ostracized back into some of the remoter areas of, of the Upper Tennessee Valley there.

H: I believe there might have been a representative of that racial group among my colleagues in college teaching. Well, she came from Hancock County.

M: Is that right?

H: Yes, she, they tended to be small and dark, and she was a very artistic woman, was a, was quite a xx very much respected by the, by the faculty. She was a very sophisticated woman, a very well-to-do person, incidentally, with a big home, with xx. Yes, I remember from my studies there that these are Black Dutch that were lived especially in Cocke County.

M: The Black Dutch did, or these Melungeons?

H: Oh, Melungeons, yes, largely connected in my mind back then with the Black Dutch.

M: Oh really?

H: Yes, it was, well all xx.

M: Well, I was curious about them because of the term Dutch. You know how, how that would get associated with, you know, the German population, which presumably came down through the valley in Virginia along with these Germans who migrated earlier, the Shultses and the Myers, and so on. There were a lot of Germans who came down with these Scotch-Irish and the English in the eighteenth century and how they, or at least their name, got associated with this group of people.

H: Well, it was the Pennsylvania Dutch, the Pennsylvania Germans [M: Sure]. So all of these families who said that they were, had a Dutch background were really referring to themselves as Germans. Let's see, there was the Myers and Shults on the Tennessee side and the Messers and some others on the North Carolina side.

M: Now did they talk about their ancestors being Dutch?

H: Well, Jonathan Kringle did, but I said "do you know any German?" He said well, he could count. I said, "well, could you count up to ten?" which he did.

M: He could?

H: He came close to the number thirty. Of course, I said "Do you know any German words?" He said xx, which I couldn't quite make out. I sent the notes I had taken from this interview to my girlfriend at Columbia, who was a German major, and she could almost place the dialect to it in Germany.

M: Is that right? and this fellow Finger?? says he, that he learned to count from his parents, from his ancestors?

H: Yes, it was just handed down.

M: Now could that have been something that he picked up from school?

H: No, no, they weren't raised in school that much.

M: Well uh ...

H: He was very, very aware of his German ancestry, and the Cable family out of Hazel Creek traced their family to Dutch origins, which I took to be German again. John Cable said that his grandfather could talk and sing in Dutch.

M: What does it mean, being German here, though?

H: Oh, the Cable was not a German name, when he came ...

M: On his mother's side, you mean?

H: Well, when he, when the family, or when the progenitor came to this country, people asked him his name, and he couldn't give it. Well, nobody could understand it, the term which he used, and since he had handled the Cables on the ship. This is a tradition. They called them "Cable," so John Cable and ...

M: I see, so that story had been remembered and passed down [H: Yes, and ...] to the xx?

H: Cable saying that he could speak and sing in Dutch.

M: Hmm, hmm, hmm, well, that reaches way back, some of your informants had parents born in what, the late eighteen teens, eighteen twenties, and so on. I believe I remember reading that one informant talked about a father born in eighteen eighteen or eighteen eleven or something.

H: Well, they, yes, the tradition in some families is that their family history, it was completely known until about eighteen fifty, no, no, seventeen fifty.

M: I see, oh yeah, which would have been about the time that a lot of families would have, you know [H: Yeah], would have ...

H: So was this about the time of the big emigration from out of ...

M: Uh-huh, about the time that my people came over, some of them on my mother's side. My great, great, great, great grandfather was born in seventeen forty-eight.

H: Was there a family record of that?

M: In Virginia there is. He was a Revolutionary War veteran.

H: Was he?

M: And that, of course, was established and indicated by the DAR, and he lived to be ninety-four and died in Middle Tennessee in eighteen forty-two. It would have been a different world. Well, we've talked for nearly an hour and a half and I'm ...

H: I'm worn out.

M: I'm prepared to stop at this point.

H: xx from exhaustion.

M: Well, well, let's at least turn it off to see how our recording has been doing. Okay, before I do that, though, let me express my gratitude to you for sitting down and sharing some of these recollections. It's always a very satisfying experience to talk to people who have blazed trails, and when you get some insights from the early days of when people were establishing their methodology and making contact in places that have since become familiar with us, but that familiarity is in many respects due to people like Joe Hall, and we all owe a great deal of thanks to him.

H: Well, I ...

M: Let me put it back on then.

H: Well, I certainly owe tremendous thanks to my interviewer, much of the story.