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Bannat Coles
January 27, 2007

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BANNAT COLES

An interview conducted by

Philip E. "Ted" Coyle

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for the

Blue Ridge Parkway

Oral History Project

for the

Ethnographic Overview and Assessment

National Park Service

U.S. Department of the Interior

Peaks of Otter, Bedford, Virginia

2007

START OF TAPE

Philip Coyle: Maybe you could tell me your name, and...?

Bannat Coles: My name is Bannat Coles, B-A-N-N-A-T, C-O-L-E-S.

Philip Coyle: That's A-T. Right? B-E-N-N-A-T?

Bannat Coles: No. Ain't no "e" in it. It's B-A-N-N-A-T.

Philip Coyle: And then your last name?

Bannat Coles: C-O-L-E-S.

Philip Coyle: And when and where were you were born?

Bannat Coles: I was born June the 6th, 1928, up on the, um, Peaks of Otter up there. That's where I was born at. Up over where that apple orchard is up here.

Philip Coyle: So, uh, it must have been a different house obviously?

Bannat Coles: Well, yeah, well, it was a different house. Yeah, we didn't own — didn't have — it was called Old Man Mack Key House.

Philip Coyle: Well, tell me about that house. Where was that house located?

Bannat Coles: Located up — up above, uh, the Peaks of Otter Orchard. You go up there to Mr. Groves... and turn and go back. But of course, it's been sold now; there's all kind of houses up there now. But that's — that's where I was... called the Old Key House, that's where I was born at.

Philip Coyle: Now would you consider that part of the Peaks of Otter or part of the Peaksville community or...?

Bannat Coles: Well, that is a part of the Peaks of Otter because it's right under the Peaks. See that's got to be part of the Peaks of Otter because it's closer to the Peaks of Otter than anything else around, beside right up on top of the Peaks.

Philip Coyle: Here I've got a — I've got a... maybe it's a little bit of a game or something but tell me, what are some of your first memories growing up there.

- Bannat Coles: Well, my first memory I can remember when I was just a little — little boy. See my grandmother who I was telling you about, Betty Owen, she was living above us in a — in a house. And, uh, when it — when it sold this last time, she — her sister's son bought it, Albert Rucker. You might have seen that in there. See, he owned it and then he sold it to, uh, I think Mr. Quinley bought it. Well, Kiah Steptoe lived up there in the house where we used to live, in Old Key House. His mother bought it after we moved on out of there. See we didn't own that; we was just renting it. That was just rented out.
- Philip Coyle: And, uh, so go on. Tell me about those memories that you have of that time.
- Bannat Coles: She, in that time, she was just... you know, she didn't have nothing. Remember just a wood stove and things in the old house. Just going from house to house and milkin' cows and pan out butter. That was the only thing you done. You ate eggs and things. You didn't go to the store or anything. That's just the way it was.
- Philip Coyle: And, uh, well, tell me about your family? You know, uh...
- Bannat Coles: Well, all my family was... all of us lived up there, see. And then we moved from up there and my daddy bought a place up on what-you-call Suck Mountain. Right, right straight up there. And that's where we lived until we — we moved down here. And then all my family, see we... some of them went to work in the town, at the rubber plant and different places around. Then, well, all my — all my family's dead now. But, uh, there was five boys and three girls. But all of them passed now but me and my — my oldest sister Ella — Ella Mosley down there — she's the oldest one of us. There was eight of us.
- Philip Coyle: And your father's name? What was your father's name?
- Bannat Coles: Reuben Coles.
- Philip Coyle: And your mom?
- Bannat Coles: Elizabeth Blake. She was a Blake, before she married him. My man Alfred Blake's daughter.
- Philip Coyle: Well, I'm just struck, um, that it was — it seems like there was a, just a big black community living here at that time. Was it all black

folks living here, or was it black and white? Or how was it back then?

Bannat Coles: Right — right, right through here? No, it — it was black and white. It — it was. Let me see. Babe Brawley, he lived up there. See, old man... uh, called Old Man Acuff, he had an orchard up there. And all of us worked... they worked back and forth for him. See, was, uh, on that place, and then, see, Babe Brawley... uh. Um, Wyatt Cole... they lived on Old Man Acuff's place. And John Steptoe, he lived over there in a close house across from 'em. It was, you know, about, let me see... about six or seven houses of black people that lived up there.

Philip Coyle: And you —?

Bannat Coles: Well, then counting man George Saunders and Elder Saunders. See they lived right up on the mountain right up — right on the Peaks right up above us, see?

Philip Coyle: Well, yeah, before I forget about it maybe you could tell me about, uh, Lon Swain?

Bannat Coles: Well, only thing I can tell you about Lon Swain is he lived up there on that mountain. See, he was married, and he had a son went to school down here at Antioch.

Philip Coyle: Uh, Lon Swain's son went to Antioch?

Bannat Coles: Yeah. He come off the mountain. All of them up there, see, that's the only school they had to go to. Just a little one-room school up here at the church. That's — that's all that was there.

Philip Coyle: And so that's —? Go on.

Bannat Coles: He had to walk from the top of that mountain to get down to the school. It was about, I'd say about three miles or four miles down here. Well. You've been up on that mountain from down — on down at the church. It's about three miles, ain't it?

Philip Coyle: A good three miles, yeah.

Bannat Coles: I'd say three miles.

Philip Coyle: And steep, too.

- Bannat Coles: Oh, yeah. It's, well — rain or snow. Walk down and walk back.
- Philip Coyle: And now that was Lon Swain's children that would go to school there? Or Lon Swain himself?
- Bannat Coles: No. Old man Lon Swain, he didn't — his children went to school there. See old man George Saunders, and Elder Saunders's son, now they children went to school down here at Antioch. See Katherine and all them, they — she went to school down at Antioch.
- Philip Coyle: Now, who's "Ella" Saunders?
- Bannat Coles: That's old man George Saunders's brother. See, when he sold out — when he got the Peaks up there, he moved down and went to Moneta. He bought a place over in Moneta.
- Philip Coyle: Where's that? I don't know where that is.
- Bannat Coles: Over on 221 over there on — that's the way, get over to the lake, Smith Mountain Lake.
- Philip Coyle: Well, maybe while we're on that, you could tell me about, um, you said — now George Saunders, he — uh, his father was from up there as well, is that — is that — is that right?
- Bannat Coles: Old man George Saunders's brother?
- Philip Coyle: No, I mean his father.
- Bannat Coles: I don't know about old man George Saunders's father. I never knew his father. I just knew old man George Saunders and Elder Saunders. I don't know about that.
- Philip Coyle: Uh-huh. And then the brother's — George Saunders's brother's name? What was it again?
- Bannat Coles: Elder Saunders.
- Philip Coyle: Elder.
- Bannat Coles: Mmhmm.
- Philip Coyle: Now — now, you knew George Saunders, is that right?

- Bannat Coles: Oh, yeah. I knew Mr. George Saunders. I knew him well.
- Philip Coyle: Tell me about him.
- Bannat Coles: Well, there's nothing I can tell you but just only he used to come to church and things down here, and he used to work up on that mountain, you know. That's where he made his living at. Working up there around Mr. John, John Vaughn's and them, you know. Peoples up there were just dayworkers and stuff. That's all you had back then to do.
- Philip Coyle: Yeah. Uh, well, maybe you could speak more about the Vaughns.
- Bannat Coles: Uh, Mr. John Vaughn? Well, Mr. John Vaughn, he just worked... you know, just the peoples around here like old man Elder and them, they worked for him. Then, he had a canning factory there and they worked in the canning factory for him. You know, canning tomatoes and stuff. That's — that's — that's what he done. And he had a little apple orchard. See, old man Acuff, he had a apple orchard over there, see, right at the foot of the mountain, and all them other people, George Saunders and all them, they worked down at that apple orchard in there. Cutting them with a mowing blade. Mowing up under them apple trees and things, see, in the summertime getting ready for the apples for the fall.
- Philip Coyle: So, they were the ones who were like, uh, doing all the physical labor there? [Inaudible.]
- Bannat Coles: They was doing — they was doing all the labor. Doing all the labor. That's what they was doing.
- Philip Coyle: And they were kind of like living off on one side of the orchard and, uh... but, you know, one of the things that's interesting about that Saunders place... Sanders, Saunders, um... is, uh, if you go up there... Have you been up to that house? Do you remember going up to that house when, uh —
- Bannat Coles: Yeah, man!
- Philip Coyle: When any — when they were still living there?
- Bannat Coles: Yessir, I used to walk from down — from where we used to live, we used to walk up through them woods up on that house.

- Philip Coyle: Well, describe it, you know, I know this is tough, uh, but, uh, maybe you could describe one day that you remember going up there? Like maybe a specific thing that you were doing, uh, maybe it was, uh, delivering something or, you know, can you remember one day going there?
- Bannat Coles: Now, I know we used to just walk up there and play with his boys and things; you know. You know, go up there and Miss — his wife's name is Bettie Saunders. We'd go up there and eat and things on Sunday and then play back down the mountain. That's the only thing we did, you know... just played back and forth, that's all.
- Philip Coyle: So, you would go up to eat, uh...
- Bannat Coles: Yeah, we'd eat on Sunday and things, you know, and just, that's all.
- Philip Coyle: At their — at their home?
- Bannat Coles: At their home, that's where... Yes. I ate there at their home many a time while they there.
- Philip Coyle: Alright, describe, you know, right now the — the, the house is pretty much in ruins. You know, it's kind of falling down, pretty much.
- Bannat Coles: I imagine it is, but I ain't seen that house, I don't know when — for years now...
- Philip Coyle: Yeah. Describe it to me. You know, what — what was the inside like? Was — did they have pictures on the wall? Was — what was the furniture like? What it — was it like on the inside?
- Bannat Coles: Well, see... it was just a log cabin. It had some pictures on the wall, you know, and things but I don't remember what they may have been. They may have had pictures of their family and things there on the wall. You know, not no pictures like they got now on the walls and things. Yeah, all of them had pictures of their family, you know, their brothers and sisters, children, and things.
- Philip Coyle: I'm starting to picture it. Yeah.
- Bannat Coles: But I don't know if any of them... you know, in the house or not... I don't know if the house is — is still up, uh, is still up there?

Philip Coyle: It's up there.

Bannat Coles: Is it?

Philip Coyle: Yeah.

Bannat Coles: The logs still there?

Philip Coyle: Yeah, it's there. We can go up; I don't know if you...

Bannat Coles: Oh, no, no, no. I mean I — I don't want to go up there. If — if you go up there it would have to be mighty cold out there because there's rattlesnakes and copperheads up there and I know, I'm not going up there. [Laughter.]

Philip Coyle: Yeah. Well, you know, I have to say, when we — last time we went up there we were afraid that there might be a bear denning in, uh, in the basement.

Bannat Coles: That, uh...

Philip Coyle: There's like a — like a canning room underneath it or something?

Bannat Coles: Yeah, it's a cannery. Y'all scared to go down there?

Philip Coyle: Yeah, well, I mean, the — there was a — a door open on the side, and it looked like there might have been some kind of big animal living in there.

Bannat Coles: S-s-something going back and forth, yeah, well, might have been! I know Rudolph wasn't scared, though.

Philip Coyle: [Laughter.] Well, he was trying not to... pretend like he wasn't scared!

Bannat Coles: Well, he was a —

Philip Coyle: But he didn't want to go into it, either.

Bannat Coles: Didn't, well, he's a bear hunter, though. He ain't scared I don't — I don't imagine.

Philip Coyle: Yeah...

Bannat Coles: No. I wouldn't go up there. I wouldn't go down there for nothing. I bet there's rattlesnakes in that place up there living in there like I don't know what.

Philip Coyle: Yeah, [inaudible], yeah. Um, but what about that, um, I mean, I guess — so how old would you have been, then, when you were going up there?

Bannat Coles: Oh, when I was going, [inaudible]... seven or eight. Something like that. Nine, ten. You know how little boys go to school and things, play up there. Because they had a son the same age as my oldest brother, and we'd play together, you know, they was a little older than I was, but we'd always, you know, we'd go together up there. But now Katherine and myself, she and me were about the same age.

Philip Coyle: And so, yeah, she'd told me a funny story about how there was a rock... and you can still see that rock —

Bannat Coles: Yeah, sort of a steep rock...

Philip Coyle: Yeah, right on outside there —

Bannat Coles: ... outside the house...

Philip Coyle: — outside the house, and she said that that was her little place where she would sit, you know?

Bannat Coles: Yeah, sit — sit in the sun, there.

Philip Coyle: And also, if her mom was, uh, if her mom had been mean to her, or beat her or, you know, whipped her or what have you,

Bannat Coles: [Laughter.]

Philip Coyle: — she would go over there and, you know, feel sorry for herself up on that rock.

Bannat Coles: Well, see now... well, George Saunders's brother, he didn't have but three kids. That was Robert Saunders, Corinne, and Gladys. And she — he got one daughter living: Gladys. She's living in Roanoke.

Philip Coyle: Is that right?

- Bannat Coles: Mmhmm. Yeah, Gladys is eighty-three or -four years old.
- Philip Coyle: Hmm, mmhmm. Do you — is —do you know what her last name — last name might be now?
- Bannat Coles: She still goes by Saunders, but she ain't — she ain't married.
- Philip Coyle: Uh-huh, huh, huh... Do you ever — do you ever speak with her?
- Bannat Coles: I haven't seen Gladys... it's been five or six years.
- Philip Coyle: What about — you know, it makes me think about that — about that Antioch Church. Do you ever have a — do you have an annual homecoming at that church, or is there...?
- Bannat Coles: Yessir. That the, uh, fourth Sunday in September. Every year.
- Philip Coyle: Is that right.
- Bannat Coles: Yeah, that's homecoming.
- Philip Coyle: So, a lot of those people might come back then, or...
- Bannat Coles: Well, you know, it used to be a lot of them come here, from [inaudible] and different places, but they don't... all of them done died out. Don't many people come back like the homecoming. From Washington, Philadelphia, places, come down and come back for the homecoming, all them peoples is gone.
- Philip Coyle: Hmm, well, yeah, it's, uh, it's, you know, and... Maybe I'm wrong about this, but I'll just say it. It seems like some of the people in this community are — it's kind of like the old people that are left here, you know. Not so many of the young people are left here.
- Bannat Coles: Well, it's very few of the older people that are left here. I mean, you know, just from my age, well, Rudolph... Rich's daddy is the oldest thing left in here now. And he's down, sick in the bed and things.
- Philip Coyle: Right.
- Bannat Coles: But he's the only one left. Him and Kiah Steptoe is the oldest two people left here in the Antioch Church.

- Philip Coyle: Hmm. Kiah Steptoe.
- Bannat Coles: Kiah Steptoe.
- Philip Coyle: Now where does he live?
- Bannat Coles: Well, Kiah is actually in long-term out there, but he lived right below the church up here. His daddy was named John Steptoe.
- Philip Coyle: I see. Oh, man, it's such a rich history, you know? I'm just struck by... uh, well, talk more about that cannery, you know, maybe you could describe that cannery. You must have gone to that many a time.
- Bannat Coles: Well, see, he just had a cannery there, see? And back in them days, you know, you had the tin cans, you know, what you call them? Uh, two ounce, what you call 'em? Uh, number two. Them number two tin cans, yeah.
- Philip Coyle: Big ones, right?
- Bannat Coles: No. About — about that tall, just the little ones. And see, when you canned your tomatoes, you had to fire that boiler with wood. Then they had to scald them and bring them around and the women, they'd peel them and pack them — pack them out in — in, in there — that house. They'd scald them and everything and pack them. You had to get up the steam for the... you used a lot of wood to keep the steam up for that.
- Philip Coyle: I understand. And, uh, it must have been a lot of labor getting that wood out.
- Bannat Coles: Well, it was a lot of labor to cut all, you know, that, all the fall... when they was getting ready for the... It started around the first of September. No. Around the last of August until the last of September. Peeling tomatoes, see. And after that it was over. That's why the women went and things, see, they made a little money out there, had a bucket, see, that they'd give them a little [inaudible], you know, that little brown thing? Every time they peeled one, they'd get that bucket full before they dumped it, they'd put a lot in it over there. I think it was two cent a — two cent a bucket, two cent a... One of them lots was two cents.
- Philip Coyle: And that's how you would get paid is by filling up those...

- Bannat Coles: By filling up them old buckets.
- Philip Coyle: And so, then the women were peeling the tomatoes.
- Bannat Coles: The women were peeling the tomatoes and the man had a pan, see, carrying pans around to dump it in they — in they bucket, and they were peeled to scald. After you would scald them. It wasn't nothing but hard work. [Laughter.]
- Philip Coyle: I can see that. Uh, what — what became of that? When did that cannery go out of business?
- Bannat Coles: Oh, God, that cannery been out of business for a long time. For a long, long time. It's been out of business thirty or forty years, I reckon.
- Philip Coyle: Well, the — talking about the tomatoes gets me thinking about, uh, George Saunders's, uh, farm up there, and, uh, did he grow tomatoes on that farm?
- Bannat Coles: Yessir. They grow tomatoes. It may not look like it, but they grew tomatoes up on that mountain. Some of the prettiest tomatoes you ever seen. You'd wonder how that work; I reckon. [Inaudible] got it in the recesses of the rocks and things, grow pretty tomatoes on that mountain.
- Philip Coyle: He must have fertilized it somehow, because, I mean...
- Bannat Coles: Well... back in them days didn't anybody fertilize none too much.
- Philip Coyle: Not even manure or anything?
- Bannat Coles: Well, if they had stock, you know, we'd put a little manure on it... on your garden and things. But didn't nobody fertilize stuff like they do now. The corn or nothing.
- Philip Coyle: Yeah, 'cause when you go to that it's almost like, uh — it's like, uh, the man terraced out some of the land there.
- Bannat Coles: Mmhmm.
- Philip Coyle: Do you remember that when you go — visited up there? That it was — that the, the land was like terraced out?

- Bannat Coles: Well, it's just, you know, the way he worked it, with his horse and thing that was all. See, when that land was — when it was cleaned up, you know, weren't nothing on it, it looked different than it do when it [inaudible] in them woods.
- Philip Coyle: I can imagine.
- Bannat Coles: Yeah, it looks a whole lot different than it did. See, when — you could see that house you know from the road, down there you know when I went up there see. But, now, yeah, I went up there and looked for it and I — you can see where the road goes in, but you can't see where the house is up there now.
- Philip Coyle: Yeah. Well, that's what they want to do, I mean, they — you know, the Parkway, the Blue Ridge Parkway, it moves slowly, you know, but what they want to do is put a little parking area there, you know...
- Bannat Coles: There where the house is at?
- Philip Coyle: And then you could go in and look at that house, you know? And, uh, and — you know, I mean, one of the purposes then would be to point out that black people have lived up in that mountain just as long as white people have essentially, you know.
- Bannat Coles: Black people have lived up on that mountain longer than... longer than the white peoples did.
- Philip Coyle: Is that right — is that right? Go on, talk about that.
- Bannat Coles: Well, see, the white people, they moved off the mountain and all the black people they stayed up there, see?
- Philip Coyle: Say that again? I didn't understand.
- Bannat Coles: See, the white people, they, you know, they moved off, you know, to different places in there... I think some of the Johnsons used to live up there... and all of them moved off, and, uh, Mr. Elder Saunders and George Saunders, and all them, see, they stayed on up there. That was the only place they had to go to, you know, work and things. That's... they didn't have no other place to go, so they just stayed on and worked.
- Philip Coyle: Now, what about that Mons Hotel? Do you know anything about that Mon, do you — do you remember that, I mean, was that —?

- Bannat Coles: Ahh, I remember — I remember it, but I don't know, you know, too much about it.
- Philip Coyle: I mean that — that was your time, though, that it was...
- Bannat Coles: Oh, yeah it was my time it was still up there. I mean I was small, but it was still up there.
- Philip Coyle: Now describe again, you were telling me before, and I didn't have the recorder on, but you were mentioning about, uh, a house that was just down below George Saunders's — Sanders's house.
- Bannat Coles: See, the house below — just down below George Saunders's house was his brother, Elder Saunders. Just as you go up the mountain, before you get to that steep curve, you know there's a — I don't know if you've seen it, it was a — it's a log house. It's built around it, but then they've still got the log part there. You can see it. But that's old man Elder Saunders's, that's his brother's house.
- Philip Coyle: Now, is that owned by somebody else now, is that right, or...?
- Bannat Coles: Yeah, it's owned by somebody else now, who it is I don't know. Somebody bought it, I reckon. I see houses around there, whose they is I don't know.
- Philip Coyle: So, that's why I was thinking that —
- Bannat Coles: And see Mr. John Vaughn's place was down below Mr. Elder Saunders's place. You got to that before you got up there to... to Elder Saunders's place.
- Philip Coyle: Now would you get — would you access that along this road here that goes in front of your house, or... and in front of Antioch Church, or was there a different road that you would take up there?
- Bannat Coles: It's a different road. That road, see, that coming from — 43 coming to Northside Supply? That's the road went up there, but it was a dirt road. See, they didn't have no surface or nothing, so they had — somebody curving gravel just to the Mons shop curve and things. Wasn't nothing but just a gravel road for years up there. When the Mons Hotel up there it was a gravel road.
- Philip Coyle: Right.

- Bannat Coles: There wasn't no hard surface up there.
- Philip Coyle: So, would — then how, uh — how would the kids come down for the school and church down here, uh...?
- Bannat Coles: Well, see, they —
- Philip Coyle: They wouldn't go all the way down here and then come back —
- Bannat Coles: Oh no, they didn't have no car or nothing. They walked.
- Philip Coyle: Right, so, I mean, where would they — I guess, the — so, they just came on a trail, I guess is what it was.
- Bannat Coles: They came on a trail down through the woods down there, I mean they just — there was a path. It was like [inaudible] down there, you know, just like a by-bypass or something, you know, that's all. They didn't have no road or nothing. They didn't have nothing to ride. So, they just walked down and walked back.
- Philip Coyle: Mmhmm. Now, what — do you know what Lon San — Lon, uh...
- Bannat Coles: Swain.
- Philip Coyle: ... Swain did for a living up there?
- Bannat Coles: He just farmed, I reckon. That's all I knew. That's all — well, that's all any of them done, 'cause you didn't have nothing else to do.
- Philip Coyle: And — and then Bettie, uh, I mean, excuse me, uh, Mabel was...?
- Bannat Coles: Well, she — she just worked, you know, for... in the house of Mr. John Vaughn. And then just around for people, you know, just day work. Washed clothes and things back there then, you know what I'm saying.
- Philip Coyle: But now you were mentioning that Mabel Swain is the daughter of George Saunders.
- Bannat Coles: George Saunders. That's right, Mr. George Saunders's daughter.
- Philip Coyle: So, uh, um, well, you know, I'm — I'm just interested to make all that connection with the Blue Ridge Parkway, but let's talk about you as well. I don't wanna just, let — tell me about tell me about

your... your life, I guess, you know. Uh, you grew up — you were, you were mentioning, uh, growing, growin' up, uh — being born up there and then moved to a mount, uh, a house on Suck Mountain.

Bannat Coles: Right, moved to a house right on it... I was born up there but when they — as I — as I grew up, see, I went to school. I was a little boy up there a while, and then I went — most of that time I went to school on Suck Mountain. And then it was a rock mines up there. That's where I star — first started working, in a rock mine with Buck Nance. And that's where I started work.

Philip Coyle: Mmhmm.

Bannat Coles: And, you know, when I first started working, you could do nothing but eighteen dollars a week?

Philip Coyle: Mmhmm, mmhmm. Well, I was wondering, you know, when you said that your father bought land up there, you know, I thought: "well, boy, I bet land was a lot cheaper back then."

Bannat Coles: Oh, Lord. I — I don't think it was... It might have been \$900 or might have been a thousand dollars, I don't know. It wasn't much.

Philip Coyle: So, what was your job in this rock mine?

Bannat Coles: Well, I used to drive a... They had a pan for loading — for loading them, see. I — what we called a load lunger. Put 'em in our load there and then we'd all go back and load them pans and come bring it out again.

Philip Coyle: Mmhmm, mmhmm.

Bannat Coles: Dump it in the truck, men would take 'em down there, take it there above Bedford and crush it. Buck — Buck Nance he was running. Buck William Nance from down in Forest. They was — they was getting that stuff out. We was working for them. Eighteen dollars and a half a week.

Philip Coyle: Now what would —

Bannat Coles: Te-ten hours a day.

- Philip Coyle: Now I was gonna — now it's a, it's hard to know, you know, like, what — what — what — what could you buy for eighteen dollars back then?
- Bannat Coles: Oh, Lord. I don't know. Well —
- Philip Coyle: 'Cause everything was cheaper back then.
- Bannat Coles: It was cheaper, man, you could buy a whole lot of stuff. Clothes and everything was cheap. Gas. Then it, uh, stuff started going up. We was... right then when it went to fifty-cent a hour, we thought they — we thought we were gonna get rich. But everything else started going on up from it. Then when it went to a dollar a hour, we knew we had it made. Then that was eight dollars a day.
- Philip Coyle: [Laughter.] But then you find out that everything else...
- Bannat Coles: Everything else was just going and going and going. That's the way it just — that's just the way it was. That's the way it was and got to.
- Philip Coyle: Well, now I'm thinking —
- Bannat Coles: You want —
- Philip Coyle: Go on.
- Bannat Coles: For a year, a whole year's work, it was about thirteen-hundred dollars a year. Work a whole year for that.
- Philip Coyle: Mmhmm.
- Bannat Coles: And then a — then a little income taxes started coming out of that you know.
- Philip Coyle: Mmhmm, mmhmm. Started coming out of that...
- Bannat Coles: Yeah.
- Philip Coyle: 'Cause I guess, you know...
- Bannat Coles: Back in 19 — when... when was that started like '35 — '35, '38. Somewhere along like that.

- Philip Coyle: That's funny to think that, uh, that the in — tax, you know, you're thinking about before income taxes, you know, and...
- Bannat Coles: Well, they didn't take much out. Maybe a dollar, a dollar and a half or something like that. It wasn't much.
- Philip Coyle: Um, well, now I'm trying to think about how old you would have been, uh, when World War II came around and, probably pretty young still.
- Bannat Coles: Well, when the — when I first went to work in the mines, I wasn't but seventeen years old.
- Philip Coyle: Uh-huh.
- Bannat Coles: And World War II, see, that was what, in '42?
- Philip Coyle: Yeah.
- Bannat Coles: Well, let's see here... In World War II, I mean, I was eighteen? Seventeen. Something like that.
- Philip Coyle: Mmhmm. But did you go?
- Bannat Coles: No. I didn't go. I never did go.
- Philip Coyle: How about those, uh... and you — you're not old enough to remember that CC camp that was there.
- Bannat Coles: That CC camp down there? That's what put that road across there, across that mountain, was the CC.
- Philip Coyle: Which road are you talking about?
- Bannat Coles: Up at Antioch Church. See, you take a right and go up on — it's what you call Suck Mountain. The CC boys — the CC put that camp across there. See, 'cause people's coming out of the service, they didn't have no jobs or nothing, see. And they put that CC camp down there. And paid them some money. That's where they — that's where they got the work from to put that road across there.
- Philip Coyle: Mmhmm. So you started working in this rock mine —
- Bannat Coles: Seventeen.

Philip Coyle: — when you were seventeen years old.

Bannat Coles: Seventeen years old.

Philip Coyle: And how long did you stay there?

Bannat Coles: Oh, God, I stayed up there about sixteen years, I reckon. I left there and then I went to the rubber plant when I was... thirty-two? Yeah, I stayed down there sixteen... 'bout fifteen, sixteen years. 'Cause there wasn't, you know, wasn't nothing else there but to work at Rubatex in Bedford. And that's where I retired from. I stayed about thirty-three years. Thirty-one years and a half.

Philip Coyle: Did you?

Bannat Coles: Mmhmm.

Philip Coyle: And stu— had a family...

Bannat Coles: Oh, yeah, well yeah, I had a family. I married in '55. 1955. October 22nd. I been married fifty-one years. Soon to be fifty-two years.

Philip Coyle: Oh, congratulations.

Bannat Coles: [Laughter].

Philip Coyle: You made fifty!

Bannat Coles: Yessir.

Philip Coyle: That's the big one not everybody makes that you know.

Bannat Coles: Yessir, I made the fifty. Soon, in October it will be fifty-two years.

Philip Coyle: Congratulations on that. Well tell me about this house where we're sitting right now.

Bannat Coles: Well, far as I know about it, old man, like I told you, old man, uh, John Welch built this house. He had a sawmill, and he built this house himself for his daddy, old man Cliff Welch. Old man Cliff Welch lived in this house, and my daddy bought it from old man Cliff Welch.

- Philip Coyle: Mmhmm. And so — so, that was — it was your father that, he came off of —
- Bannat Coles: He came off of Suck Mountain down here.
- Philip Coyle: To get this house, right?
- Bannat Coles: Yeah.
- Philip Coyle: And, uh, now what was your father doing at that time?
- Bannat Coles: Well, he just raised tomatoes and, well, we cut pulp wood and stuff like that, you know. Logs, stuff like that, and sold them, you know, had a truck with logs took, you know, to the sawmill and stuff.
- Philip Coyle: And how did that, you know, uh, speaking of the tomatoes again, it seems like this — the tomato farming was just a huge force around here at that time.
- Bannat Coles: That's the only thing peoples had to make money, was tomatoes.
- Philip Coyle: Yeah.
- Bannat Coles: And they got paid, see, I believe it was November. And everybody got paid in November, that's the day they had a big check. [Laughter.] They thought it was a big check then. They'd go — well, they'd go to town. Everybody'd get their beans and all that stuff for — for winter. That's how they made it through the winter.
- Philip Coyle: Now, people were driving automobiles then, or...?
- Bannat Coles: No, a wagon and a horse.
- Philip Coyle: Wagon, [inaudible]...
- Bannat Coles: Yeah, you had a horse, and you'd ride it — go from here to town in a wagon. And these roads out through here, they all was dirt roads. There wasn't no hard surface road.
- Philip Coyle: Now I mean, that's a different picture, you know, you think, well —
- Bannat Coles: Yeah.

- Philip Coyle: — there's that — that cash money that you were going to get, basically that's the cash money you're gonna get for the year then, is that—?
- Bannat Coles: That was the year, the year's work. Unless, you know, some of these white people — some of 'em would hire you on their farm, or something you know to help 'em out, you know, in the — 'round the barns or fence or something for them, you know.
- Philip Coyle: But that was going to be your major cash.
- Bannat Coles: That that — that was your — that was your major cash when you —
- Philip Coyle: And then you're going to get in a — a wagon and...
- Bannat Coles: Go to town and get your stuff and bring it back. That's how they got their clothes and everything for another year. We didn't get but one pair of shoes a — a year and when they — with them shoes, you wore the same ones, because you didn't get no more until then. [Laughter.]
- Philip Coyle: [Laughter.] See, that's when people start walking barefoot, you know, so they, you know, they've got shoes, but they don't want to hurt their shoes, you know.
- Bannat Coles: You can believe it or not. When it turned warm in March people put them out, turn their toes in and started walking barefoot. I mean the kids, the old people, they had... But now kids already they can't walk there on the ground barefooted.
- Philip Coyle: No. Yeah that's uh, um... Well, this house is, uh, it's a beautiful house, you know, and it's well, um, it's well kept up and everything. It's great to see one of these old houses still, you know, serving its purpose.
- Bannat Coles: Yeah, and I think I'd... my daddy deeded this over to me I believe it was... '59 or '60, I believe. I been living here, it's been mine ever since, I mean. He deeded it over to me there in '60, I believe.
- Philip Coyle: Well now do you ever — do you ever, uh, have a memory of going up to this place called, uh, Big Spring? I think it's called Big Spring. It's on the way up to, you know, where the Mons Hotel would have been and, uh, kind of — I think it's on the side of the,

uh, the old road, and it's — now there's a picnic area up there for Blue Ridge Parkway.

Bannat Coles: You said Big Spring?

Philip Coyle: I think that that's what it's called but I could be wrong.

Bannat Coles: See, there's a spring up there, I don't know why you called it Big Spring I know but that road is, uh, they cut that spring out, didn't they?

Philip Coyle: Hmm. People — I just read and pe— uh, um, people, uh, I don't know where I'm get-getting this, but it seems like I've read, or people have talked about how there used to be like picnics at Big Spring that they would — that people would go up there and have picnics out there but — but maybe I'm on the wrong track.

Bannat Coles: It might have been a... it might have been you know when I was smaller... Big Spring? But I don't remember going up out to the Big Spring.

Philip Coyle: Mmhmm. Now when you were young, would you go all the way up into — into the Peaks of Otter, or just up to the Saunders house?

Bannat Coles: No. I just — just went up there to the Saunders's. See it were, all the way up to the Peaks about where that tower's at, see that was just a dirt road going up there. People look at me and I tell 'em I've been living under here all my life and never have been up on them Peaks. [Laughter.] Over the top of the Peaks.

Philip Coyle: Is that right?

Bannat Coles: Yeah, there's looking at it, but now going up on top of that mountain I never have been up there.

Philip Coyle: And so, it was — and it wasn't particularly a thing that people would do around here, right?

Bannat Coles: Well, it would depend on [inaudible]. You take the Peaks, and Flat Top, see, and then Apple Orchard. But you can believe it or not, Apple Orchard Mountain is taller than the Peaks or the Flat Top.

Philip Coyle: Mmhmm.

- Bannat Coles: See, the Air Force base is on the Apple Orchard back there. On account of...
- Philip Coyle: Yeah, I — I, uh, they must have put it on there 'cause it's the tallest one too, you know.
- Bannat Coles: Yeah. It don't look like it, but it — it is though. And you might not believe it, you know, Sharp Top is taller than the Peaks.
- Philip Coyle: Hmm, hmm. Well now, tell — you had some kids, I guess?
- Bannat Coles: I got six. Th — five girls and one boy. All of 'em is married and away. Nobody here but just me and my wife. [Laughter.]
- Philip Coyle: And they all moved away from Bedford and everything or...?
- Bannat Coles: Hmm, well, some in Lynchburg. Two in Lynchburg. One live down in Hurt. And then my son, he live in Bedford. And my daughter, she live down in Bedford here. And then one live down in Forest.
- Philip Coyle: Well, let me ask you about the church a little bit. And, uh, you know, tomorrow — maybe you could tell me what to expect tomorrow, because tomorrow, uh, Reverend Taylor told me that there's going to be a communion.
- Bannat Coles: Well, we have communion, you know, after — after the service, you know, and it's every — communion every fourth Sunday.
- Philip Coyle: What — well, I just, I'm sorry to be ignorant, but what is communion?
- Bannat Coles: You know, you just give communion, have just like a cracker and wine that you take.
- Philip Coyle: Uh-huh, uh-huh.
- Bannat Coles: After that, that's just all. It don't take no time to do it. It's just something they always do. What you call communion after service.
- Philip Coyle: Maybe you could tell me, how does a, a — what's the normal... how does a normal service go at the Antioch Church?
- Bannat Coles: Well, the normal service, we start at 11 o'clock. Yep. We get started at 11. Most times we out by 1 anyhow. Might be a little bit

after 1. If we don't have communion, we just a regular service, after — after we stopped preaching get out, we get out right around 1 o'clock.

Philip Coyle: And — and the service itself? What — what happens first in the service and what happens second and what happens third...?

Bannat Coles: Well, see most times you know you have your... testify. Get up there and testify and things, that's... and then he opens up the service with prayer and scripture reading.

Philip Coyle: Singing?

Bannat Coles: Yeah, they have singing. Tomorrow they'll be the... what they call the well the Young Adult Choir, they gonna sing tomorrow. And we — we, we called the old Senior Choir, they'll sing tomorrow. That be my sister down there, and she eighty-five years old. So, you know why — why that — we's call it the "Senior" Choir! [Laughter.]

Philip Coyle: And then, uh... now how long has, uh, uh, Pastor Taylor been with you all?

Bannat Coles: About two years and a half. He came back here from Philadelphia. But still, he's a good speaker, though. Well, you — you'll find out for yourself when you get there. But his wife, she won't be there tomorrow she was out [inaudible]. Now she can play the piano and sing too.

Philip Coyle: Mmhmm.

Bannat Coles: I mean all the choirs is good. But I mean, you know, she's a little bit better, is what I say. You know, a little bit diff — better than they is, because she's a younger person and she can play better than the piano player they have. But all of them is good, music doing good.

Philip Coyle: Now that Antioch Church — uh, the Antioch School, that, it — it's not there anymore, right?

Bannat Coles: Oh, no, no. That school's been down, I reckon, oh, twenty years. Or thirty years.

Philip Coyle: And what —

- Bannat Coles: See, see the Antioch Church was built, that was just a — when I first started going to church there that was just a little wooden church there, you know. Just a frame church. This here brick is around the old frame part. This — the old church is sitting there, but now the shell's around there — that brick part is around there. We bricked it in '69, I believe. 1969 put that brick around that church. And the Fellowship Hall back there, that long part, that's been there... that's been about thirty years, I reckon. No. Maybe not thirty years, because Reverend [inaudible] was here. It's been about twenty-five years. We've done a lot of work on that church from what it — from what it used to come. See, you just had a wood, two wood stoves, see one set up at the front of the church and one at the back. You know, but, for instance, this is my old, long tin heaters, you know, like that. Then we got coal heaters. Coal stoves we put in there. And you're talking about just old, you know, wooden benches. And there up next to the front — I've seen preachers preaching there with overcoats on. [Laughter.] In the wintertime.
- Philip Coyle: I can well imagine that, yeah.
- Bannat Coles: Yessir.
- Philip Coyle: At least until everybody got warmed up, you know.
- Bannat Coles: Everybody got, well, it's — the service was just about over when everybody got warmed up. [Laughter.]
- Philip Coyle: Then they don't want to leave.
- Bannat Coles: No. Now see you got — we got a gas furnace in the church now. Air conditioning. Didn't have no air conditioning none in the church back then. Raise your window and you didn't even have screens anywhere, just raise the window and let the air come on in.
- Philip Coyle: Well, it strikes me that, um, that you're kind of like, uh, somebody who's right at the edge of when things changed around here, you know. Like 'cause you — you grew up, I mean you were born in an era when everybody farmed, or sharecropped —
- Bannat Coles: Oh yeah.
- Philip Coyle: — or sharecropped or worked for the orchards and the canneries...

- Bannat Coles: Oh yeah, well, that's the biggest thing my daddy done was just sharecrop with people, you know. You take that land down road Northside, we used to ride horse over that mountain all the way down there and plow all them fields out with horses. Didn't have no tractor or nothing, so we... had about three teams. Six horses. Each one of us would ride a team down there, see, and stay there till sundown and ride it back.
- Philip Coyle: Well, what can you tell me about your father, you know, as a — as a person or as a man, you know, what — what —?
- Bannat Coles: Well, he was a — he was a man, he just sharecropped, you know, with people that's — that's all he had to do. Then he went to church up here at Antioch. And he made his diggin' see we just — we cut pulp wood, logs. Off of the land and stuff like that. That's — that's how we made our living.
- Philip Coyle: Well, it just strikes me that he must have been, uh — well, I mean, I guess like everybody that can survive in that period —
- Bannat Coles: Oh yeah, oh yeah, he was a —
- Philip Coyle: — he — he had to be a hard man, you know.
- Bannat Coles: Well, he worked from sunup to sundown. Once he's there they didn't put no clock on to see what time it was. Waiting for [inaudible] dinner bell, see, the bell would ring, you know, and everybody's — they ring that, you know it's time to come in and eat. You'd eat and then you'd go back to the field, you'd stay there till the sun went down. That was twelve, fifteen hours a day. [Laughter.]
- Philip Coyle: And you — and your mom? Maybe you could de — describe her for me.
- Bannat Coles: Well, my mom, she just stayed at the house, you know, and... What I recall, taking care of our clothes, putting — whatever we'd tire out there she'd figure, put another patch on top of it, kept it. [Laughter.] It works! [Inaudible.] In the fall there she would work in the canning factory, peel tomatoes, you know. That was the only thing she had to do. But she'd stay at the house and take care of the house, cook. Well, she had three meals a day that she had to get... Breakfast, we called dinner, and supper. Three meals a day she had to cook for.

- Philip Coyle: Now did she keep a garden or did —
- Bannat Coles: Oh, oh —
- Philip Coyle: — your dad keep a garden or?
- Bannat Coles: Oh, yeah. We had a good garden. That's how we made... you know you raised your stuff and canned it up for another year. Your string beans, tomatoes, corn. All that stuff was canned up. You raise — raise your own hogs. Can that meat up. You — 'course you had your ham, your shoulder, side meat. You didn't have to go to the store. The only thing you had to go to the store to get, back out then, was sugar, and coffee, and kerosene for the lamps. Everything else you raised. You had your own chickens, your own eggs and everything.
- Philip Coyle: Now who was doing the work on the — on the garden and on the — on the animals, you know?
- Bannat Coles: Well, we'd do it, you know, that's, you goin' do it — when you're doing the share, I mean, raise your own garden, go and work in the garden, go into the field, that's the way just — that's just the way it done. Well after you got it, you know, I've got it grown, my mother, she'd go out there, you know, and pick what she need out of it, you know, and stuff. What she'd need for to cook for us to eat and stuff. You raised your own wheat. You raised your own corn. They had a mill, see, you go there and grind that stuff.
- Philip Coyle: And what — what mill would you all go to?
- Bannat Coles: Go down to Kelso Mill.
- Philip Coyle: You'd go that — that far to...
- Bannat Coles: That far. But old man John Miller had a mill, what's called the Mill Road, down here. That old mill is still... well there's a house down there that's right across from it. That's the mill that we used to go. Old Miller mill.
- Philip Coyle: Now you — did you go to school at the Antioch Church — the Antioch School [inaudible]?
- Bannat Coles: Right down there. That's the only school we had to go to.
- Philip Coyle: Now tell me about, uh, tell me about that school.

- Bannat Coles: Well, see —
- Philip Coyle: Well, first off, what did it look like?
- Bannat Coles: It was just a, you know, just a wood, just a little, weatherboard school. Now, see, the only thing you went to there was seventh grade. That's as high as you went.
- Philip Coyle: Did you make it all the way?
- Bannat Coles: No. I didn't go to but fifth grade. [Laughter.] Then I come out. My mom and dad told me I had to come out and go to work. That's just the way it was.
- Philip Coyle: And did they — did they have it, uh, would they let off school so that you all could work? Or, or how did they — I mean, did they — was the school year, how would that [inaudible]?
- Bannat Coles: Well, back — back there then, you know, in the biggest time we went to school was in the wintertime. Then when you couldn't do nothing else. I mean, the boys. But then, the girls, they went [inaudible] most of the time you know. But in the spring of the year, when it come — when the boys they — when a boy was big enough to work, they'd come out and start to plow on, [laughter], daddy's plow and things like that.
- Philip Coyle: Yeah, I mean, uh, well, sometimes I wonder about school, like, you know, maybe there's almost too much schooling in a sense, you know, 'cause, I mean, if you're going —
- Bannat Coles: Well...
- Philip Coyle: — to work for a living, it's almost like you don't need that, I mean, you need to learn to, read and write but —
- Bannat Coles: Yeah.
- Philip Coyle: After that, you know...
- Bannat Coles: Well, I don't know, schoolchildren now don't — they don't want to go to school, all's they have to do is get up and catch the bus — catch the bus right here at the road, and then don't want to go to school. We had to walk three and four miles to school and walk

back. In the cold. In the snow and rain, and snow and stuff. And then they go on up — the average children from my age on up to, you know, I believe the '60s might be when bus and things started coming here, taking them into Bedford, you didn't have no better school but like I said just seventh grade is as high as it went.

Philip Coyle: Yeah, I mean, I guess after, where — where would you go after that? You'd have to go to —

Bannat Coles: Well...

Philip Coyle: — a city like Rich— Lynchburg, I guess.

Bannat Coles: Come to Lynchburg; Lynchburg or Bedford.

Philip Coyle: Yeah.

Bannat Coles: They didn't have a bus to carry 'em, 'cause we didn't have no cars or nothing to carry them.

Philip Coyle: Yeah, and so, you'd have to have money to... You couldn't go back and forth so you'd probably have to board or something like that.

Bannat Coles: You'd have to board if you went. If you didn't have the money to pay for the board and things, then what do you — what do you's do? Take what you've got and go on and live with it.

Philip Coyle: Yeah.

Bannat Coles: Well, but I — I sit and look out at the world. I might not have gone no further, but I came out and I made a good living and everything else just like the rest of them do. I got by with it.

Philip Coyle: So, now, tell me about the teacher. That — was there one teacher or was it...?

Bannat Coles: One teacher.

Philip Coyle: Who was it?

Bannat Coles: Well, let me see... there was a Seymour, and a Reverend Brown, and, well, Miss Susie Gibson, she — she'd come out. She was the, uh, you know, go around to the schools and see what you need and things. She was working with the Supervisor and thing.

- Philip Coyle: Now, were the teachers black or white at that school?
- Bannat Coles: All of them was black. I — I never went to school with no white teachers or nothing. Everything, went to school, you know that was when race went to school just — all black went to school up here and all white went to their school. That's just the way it was. Now the bus — the white children, they went to... there was a bus come down through here, but it didn't pick us up.
- Philip Coyle: [Laughter.]
- Bannat Coles: That's just the way it was.
- Philip Coyle: Is that how it was...
- Bannat Coles: Now you can't believe it, but that's just the way it was. I mean if you look at it now, you say, "I can't believe it," but that's... that's just the way it was. And people, the way we was raised, you didn't pay no attention to it. Just the way you raised; I reckon it's what — just what you get used to.
- Philip Coyle: Yeah, Mr. Wright was interesting that way, he was saying, uh, and I don't — I wonder how you'd feel about it, but he said he didn't feel like things had changed that much in terms of, uh, you know, race relations or whatever you want to call it, you know, people. You know, between black and white —
- Bannat Coles: Well...
- Philip Coyle: — people. But it sounds like you would say that things have changed a lot.
- Bannat Coles: No, well, I mean, just for schools and things. But as far as for going to one another's houses and things, it ain't changed. You'd go then 'bout as often as you go now. You didn't go to no white person's house around through here. I mean, the black, if you didn't get something to eat... when they was eating, you'd eat. You'd go to the house any time of night or anything, in morning, if they had it, they'd get up and go — they'd go see after things. And if we was walking to town and somebody had a car or something, they'd pick you up and carry you. I don't care if it was the women or the men. They'd pick you up and carry you, you thought nothing about it.

- Philip Coyle: It sounds like a neighborliness.
- Bannat Coles: It's just a neighborliness, it's just the way it was. Everybody knew one another. You could leave your house unlocked, nobody'd... you know, you didn't have to lock your house up like you do now. Wouldn't see anybody... paid no attention to it, ain't nobody breaking in or you know... you left your stuff in there where you left it at that's where it would be when you went back. You didn't have to worry about it.
- Philip Coyle: So, but how about now, then?
- Bannat Coles: Oh, you lay your stuff down now, you know, you're — when you get back, it's gonna be gone before you get — you get — get to the road! It's that much different. And back then, I don't think there was but one state trooper and one deputy sheriff, I reckon. Old man Jim Marshall was the only deputy sheriff I knew. Back out — back out then we didn't have... Morris — old man Morris Bender, that's right I forgot him. That was the only deputy sheriff that I knew back out then. Now there's deputy sheriffs everywhere, but still, they'll ride right by them or something, I don't know. Things just have changed.
- Philip Coyle: You know, I sometimes... Somebody like you, you've lived a full life and everything, and what — what do you think about, you know, I — I always — I always... I'll tell you... I'll just be honest with you, you know, sometimes I — I look at the way things are today, and I... and I worry about the way the world is going, you know, and, uh, but now you've lived longer than I have, you know, and you've seen that — you've seen, 'cause particularly, you've lived that — you've lived that farming life —
- Bannat Coles: Yep.
- Philip Coyle: — when you were a kid, you know.
- Bannat Coles: Sure.
- Philip Coyle: But then — then you've lived — now, and then you also lived the life in a factory, and now —
- Bannat Coles: In a factory, yep.

- Philip Coyle: And now whatever we're going through now, all those factories are closing, they're going to other countries, you know, what's your — what's your take on the state of the world these days?
- Bannat Coles: Ah, well, to me, the state of the world looking in bad shape.
- Philip Coyle: Uh-huh
- Bannat Coles: I mean, that's my — that's just my opinion. I just think that. From what it did look like, you know, from when we come along, and jobs — jobs can be jobs around then. See when we — it used to be when you come off you could use a pick and a shovel, and you say you had a job. But now, see, they don't got — they don't use that no more. You've got to have — you said school, you got to have the schooling for to learn how to run that ma-machinery and stuff. How to read them thermometers and things sitting up there. You don't find nobody digging, building all these — building things with no pick and shovel digging a foundation and things. All that's done away with. Which is a good thing, it save a whole lot of manpower, but it cuts out a lot of jobs.
- Philip Coyle: Yeah, this reminds me of that cannery, you were talking about, you said it was, it, you know, ain't nothing but that work —
- Bannat Coles: Nothing but that — nothing but that work, but it was —
- Philip Coyle: — but it was work!
- Bannat Coles: It was work, back out then they work, and they was — people was glad to get it. Yeah, they told me they was glad to get that and get it for their...
- Philip Coyle: Well, I just, you know, I — I teach in the university myself, you know, and I, so, I — I'm exposed to young ki-kids, what I call young kids, you know, they're eighteen, they think they're adults, but, you know —
- Bannat Coles: Yeah.
- Philip Coyle: — they're eighteen and —and it seems like the one thing they look for is just, uh, comfort —
- Bannat Coles: That's all they look for...

- Philip Coyle: — and ease, you know, everything has to be easy, and they think well, if it's easy, you know, it has to be good, but at the same time, you know, it seems like maybe you lose something when you lose that —
- Bannat Coles: That easy work...
- Philip Coyle: — focus on hard work, you know what I mean, it's like there's something about — about working for it that's...
- Bannat Coles: Well, I tell you, eighteen-, nineteen-, twenty-year-olds, they don't know how to work for it, you know the reason why? Because their parents give it to them. You take a child eighteen to twenty years old, they done never done a day's work. They go to school don't come up out of there until they're twenty or something like that, eighteen, and they never have — they lay down in the morning and get up late. Parents go out and buy them a car, and give them the car. Give them money to put the gas in it. Now what they got to work for? Buy their own clothes. We're coming on, we had to work for our clothes. When we got it, we appreciated it.
- Philip Coyle: And then it was, you know work, for a week to get some clothes, you know.
- Bannat Coles: You work — you work — well, you worked for a week, and then when you — when you got a dollar in your pocket, man that dollar looked like, I don't know, looked like a mountain.
- Philip Coyle: Yeah, things have changed, you know, I mean, I try to — try to get —
- Bannat Coles: Yessir!
- Philip Coyle: — I try to get my students to see, because you know — and it's hard for me even because I grew up you know after the — after the farming way of life —
- Bannat Coles: After, after...
- Philip Coyle: — was already on the way out.
- Bannat Coles: All the way out.
- Philip Coyle: After World War II it started going out in the united states

- Bannat Coles: Started going out... But you take — how are you going — my children, I can't get them to see it. I mean I can explain it to them, but they look at me, they say, well, you know, "dad I can't believe that." See then, they don't know; they wasn't born, they'd never see it. That's just like it is — well there's a lot of things going on now, I see it, and I can't hardly believe it, the ways done change like that. It's just hard to believe, but it is.
- Philip Coyle: Like what?
- Bannat Coles: I mean just like — something like that, right, we got children, some of them make twelve, fourteen, twenty dollars an hour. I can't believe people makin' twenty dollars an hour and they can't make it. I mean it just, just people, you know... They say twenty dollars an hour now, and here I worked all the week for eight — for eighteen dollars and a half. [Laughter.] And yet of a week they'll make twelve or thirt — 'bout twelve hundred dollars, make a — bring home a thousand. Twelve hundred dollars a — a week. Here I worked a whole year and didn't make twelve or thirteen hundred dollars. Now that's — that's — that's what make it — you cannot believe that. You can't picture that, that's just what it is.
- Philip Coyle: Mmhmm. [Inaudible.]
- Bannat Coles: But we lived happy with it.
- Philip Coyle: Well, that's what I — that's one of the things I think that it — it's, uh, it seems to me that people have lost track of the human values, you know, a little bit, you know.
- Bannat Coles: They done lost it a whole lot.
- Philip Coyle: [Laughter.]
- Bannat Coles: They done lost it a whole lot, yeah, see, now they're lookin'. I mean, tell it just like it is, the white and black both done lost it a whole lot.
- Philip Coyle: Mmhmm.
- Bannat Coles: I mean, see, they — you are not raised up to it, that's what it is. And you think everything got to be... you can't find nobody now wants to work for seven or eight dollars a hour. I mean, they say, "I can't make it."

- Philip Coyle: Well, of course there's —
- Bannat Coles: Well, I mean —
- Philip Coyle: — immigrants coming in from Mexico that will.
- Bannat Coles: Yeah. Well, you know, them other peoples that come from Mexico and thing, them [inaudible] — you know, them other peoples will work. When they go to work, they never even go to look back, they just keep on and start again. And then one of us around here, we's, if we go to work at 7 o'clock, 9 o'clock we gotta have a break.
- Philip Coyle: Mmhmm.
- Bannat Coles: And we just [inaudible] been done. By the time 1 o'clock you got to have another break before you go home at 3 o'clock. I mean things just done changed from what it used to be. If you don't get that, they goin' to the phone, get on the phone, "well, my job's too hard" or something.
- Philip Coyle: Well, I'll try — I'll switch up on you here, we'll come — we'll come to an end. I know I just, you know, showed up here at your door today, but... [clears throat]. Maybe you could tell me a little bit more about Kelso's. That seems like it was a real hub and it's been a real hub for a long time.
- Bannat Coles: Kelso's been a — a hub down there for a long time. See, they used to have a mill down there. Sawmill. There was three stores down at Kelso's. One of 'em... one there where the mill was at. One on one side and one on the other. For the best part of them, you know, the biggest portion out there, you know, they didn't go to town, that's where they went was down to Kelso's and got the stuff what they had to get and walk on back.
- Philip Coyle: And now who — and now those three different stores with three different owners, then, or...?
- Bannat Coles: Three different owners. That's exactly what it was.
- Philip Coyle: Mmhmm. And, uh, uh, now was that — was that segregated at all? Or was that...? I mean, did — was there like a store for the black folks and...?
- Bannat Coles: No, no, no, no. No, you could go to any — any store you want, just... any store you want just as long —

- Philip Coyle: [Inaudible] around money, I guess.
- Bannat Coles: As long as you had a piece of money you could go down and buy it, that's just the way it was. 'Cause — it's — only segregation, segregate you separate you didn't have the money!
- Philip Coyle: Right...
- Bannat Coles: [Cough.]
- Philip Coyle: Yeah. But, yeah, that's — that's another thing right there that's pretty interesting, you know, now it's like it's all about whether you have money, it's —
- Bannat Coles: Yeah.
- Philip Coyle: — you know.
- Bannat Coles: If you had the money, you — if you had the money, you could buy it.
- Philip Coyle: Well, that's the same way it was back then too
- Bannat Coles: Yeah. But if you didn't have no money, what you — where's you going when you got no money to buy nothing with?
- Philip Coyle: Alright, well, I'm gonna ask you [clears throat] what I wanna ask you is, you know, if and when they — they ever put a little parking area in up there at, uh, Saunders cabin, you know, uh, what would you say to visitors, you know, that were coming along through the Parkway what would you say about — about the Saunders family and what would you say about the Peaksville community and, uh, and about black people in the area? Or people in the area generally?
- Bannat Coles: Well, all the — all the people in there, over through here they have been good, I mean the — the white and the black. I mean, you know, the whites, you know, they had a little bit more than the blacks, but what they live on... they worked together. I mean, you know... There never was nothing, like I said, "slaves" or nothing like that, you know, just. Just, well, they stayed like they was the white and the black but didn't neither one of them have much more than the other. It was just hard working. That's just the way it were. Back out then it was hard working for everybody.

Philip Coyle: And what about the Peaksville community here? What — what — what can you say about the Peaksville community?

Bannat Coles: Only thing I can say Peaksville community, to me, is a nice place where to live. You know, I mean, it just is... it's nice, always has been, and it still is.

Philip Coyle: I tell you it is beautiful here, you know.

Bannat Coles: I mean, the people around here, they'll help one another. I mean, they — they're white, they aren't white, they'll help one another. There's a white neighbor up yonder; when my sister passed, don't know, two... she passed Saturday before last, they was right here. And even, she prepared and bring food and stuff and just like that, they always did... I mean, we just neighbors, if one needs something you just go to the other one and tell them whatever you need they'll — they — they'll be there, yessir, they'll help you...

Philip Coyle: So that's — that's going on even to this day [inaudible].

Bannat Coles: At this day and time. Yessir. That's just like it is.

Philip Coyle: And what about the Saunders family? What can you — what can you say about that family?

Bannat Coles: They was just a nice family. That was all. Can't [inaudible]. Old man George Saunders raised I don't know how many boys; know I was older than them... I think six or seven of them boys and two girls I know. Yeah, two girls Mabel and, uh, Katherine. And I think it was six boys or seven boys. And that they was a nice family. Old man Elder Saunders, he had three children. All of them was a nice family.

[Phone ringing.]

Philip Coyle: Well, thank you so much. I'm going to turn off the machine.

Bannat Coles: You're entirely welcome.

END OF TAPE