

Interviewers: Gus Meade and Barbara Edwards
Interviewee: Buddy Thomas

Gus Meade: play something Buddy.

(music plays)

Meade: Say the name of that banjo tune

Thomas: Ginning around the roll girls (?)

Meade: Say that again.

Thomas: Ginning around the roll girls

Meade: Ginning around the roll girls?

Thomas: yeah.

Meade: What was that song were their words to that song?

Thomas: yeah it was words to it but I don't remember about one or two of em. I remember hearing em saying, see that old mule a coming, he ain't got a half a load, his darned old ears and floppin and he won't stay in the road.

Meade: any more?

Thomas: That's all I remember.

Meade: did your dad play that?

Thomas: No my mother and em played that one.

Meade: She might still know that one then.

Thomas: Yeah she could know probably the words.

Meade: What was it about? (?)

Thomas: I wouldn't know but we just call it Gin Around the Roll Girls

Meade: (?)

Thomas: Yeah I used to play it but I have to, it's been so long I can't remember nothing. I'd have to tune it in a cross key too (?)

(Music playing)

Meade: What did your dad? I mean what did he do?

Thomas: He was a clay miner. He worked in a clay mine, started when he was fifteen.

Meade: What was his name?

Thomas: William Harvey Thomas.

(background conversations)

Meade: Where's he from? (?)

Thomas: Emerson, Kentucky (?)

Meade: Where's your father's grandfather from?

Thomas: You mean what country or?

Meade: Yeah

Thomas: I think it's England or Scotland or some place like that I'm not for sure.

Meade: You never saw your father.

Thomas: no

Meade: (?)

Thomas: His grandmother and uncle raised him, see his dad didn't raise him he died in Wisconsin, he lived there when he past away

Meade: Where were your great uncle, William's uncle I mean he would have been from the same place (?)

Thomas: yeah, from Emerson. Yeah I think he said they come, when they first come down there, they come from Scott County, Virginia.

Meade: Oh they come out from Virginia?

Thomas: Yeah. Yeah the Gillums (?) did they come from Scott County, Virginia down there

Meade: The Gillums (?)? Who are they?

Thomas: That was John Gillum, was his grandfather, Johnny Gillum and Nancy Gillum was his grandmother, Marion Gillum was his uncle and then they had an uncle named John Gillum D. (?) and Harm and one Nat (?) and one Dan I think.

Meade: How about where do the Thomas's come from? (?)

Thomas: they come from Greenup County on Shulls (?) in the head of Shulls is the best we can trace back

Meade: Now who are they? I get mixed up already. (laughing)
Now your father's father, you don't know much about where he was from?

Thomas: No I think they said they was from England or Scotland or some place like it is with people

Meade: Well now, where was you father born?

Thomas: He was born at Emerson, Kentucky

Meade: You said that already.

Thomas: yeah

Meade: and how about your mother then? We can talk a little bet about your grandfather (?)

Thomas: She was at the head of Grassy, Kentucky they called the post office the grass. I guess my grandfather was born there too.

Meade: what have you heard about him? You just saw him when you were a little boy right?

Thomas: Yeah I saw him. I just about remember seeing him twice

Meade: What was his name?

Thomas: Jimmy Richmond. He farmed, he was a farmer and fiddled. He was a good fiddler they tell. Played for a lot of square dances and things like that.

Meade: Tell about. How you started off (?)

Thomas: My brother bought a home made fiddle one time and when they brought it home he told me that if ever he caught me with it. He said I dare you to let me catch you with that fiddle he said I'll give you a good beating, and they went to church and I was wanting to get a hold of it so bad I was sick I got me a box and a chair and climbed up on

the wall and it hanging on the wall and when he came back I was playing a tune on it starting it (?) my dad made him let me play it then.

Meade: How'd you learn your first tune then?

Thomas: My mother whistled it, it was an old tune called "Cluck Old Hen" (?). She'd whistle it and then I'd play it along behind her.

Meade: and she got that from her father (?).

Thomas: yeah. I forgot it the next day I couldn't never think of it, just learned this tune and that one, next day "Old Joe Clark", the next day I never could think of "Cluck Old Hen" (?), I'd learn a little of this one and another tune and from there on I started off on all of em you know a lot of em.

Meade: How old were you?

Thomas: I was nine year old.

Meade: Well now you were telling me that you were slowly starting on fiddling. When did you start really fiddling?

Thomas: Well to really bow out a fiddle I'd say it ain't been over eight or ten years ago yeah about

Meade: You've been 29

Thomas: I'm 38

Meade: Your 37 now but yeah you would have been 29 then when you started fiddling.

Thomas: Yeah. I got away from home you know up around Portsmouth (?), Ohio, and seen Maurice Allen (?) different and good fiddlers you know playing, I learned a lot of bow licks from em then I hear tunes and you know the notes my mother and em whistled you can get em with the bow then (?). It just comes natural when you hear you know learn

Meade: So there was quiet a gap I mean a, well how long did you stay home when did you leave home then?

Thomas: well I didn't leave till I was nineteen; I went to Mansfield, worked in a factory there and then I come back farmed around and I stayed when my dad while he was sick, then I, different times after I worked in factories, then I'd go a home over around Portion while mean a home over around Portion (?) and maybe stay two or three days around like that and maybe little to the fiddlers.

Meade: you just went from one job to another

Thomas: yeah. I cut timber a lot, we used to cut with an old cross-cut saw, I'd walk for about five or six miles I'd work for about three dollars a day and cut all day with a cross-cut saw and then walk back home

Meade: How far did you get, how far did you go when you were traveling around? You went to Indiana weren't you?

Thomas: Yeah I was in Indiana and Ohio, Michigan, West Virginia

Meade: Where'd you go in Michigan?

Thomas: I went up there to play.

Meade: Oh this after you started fiddling.

Thomas: Yeah. Then I went through Michigan going to Canada

Meade: You went fishing up there somewhere

Thomas: Yeah I went fishing up in Canada.

Meade: what was the story, somebody, what was the story up there?

Thomas: Well we got up there the water was real high and we couldn't do any good, and it was, three more guys went besides me and two of em fussed all the time and this one guy said his trip had been completely destroyed, he said if it hadn't been for Shorty, he called it, kept him all the time laughing and stuff he said

Meade: why'd you keep him laughing, were you all the time pulling tricks (?)

Thomas: I was all the time telling all kinds of jokes and saying things when we were out on lakes and things like that, he told em when we got back he said if it hadn't been Shorty his trip wouldn't have been worth anything he said. He's from Chicago I believe.

Meade: How come you learned so many old time tunes?

Thomas: Well I just remembered hearing people play em down there and my mother whistled a lot of em, my uncle then you know I got a lot of em from different people around. Then I liked old time the best too.

Meade: Why?

Thomas: It seemed they had a lonesomer sound or something or other

Meade: When did you get in to playing bluegrass? Just as people wanted you to play it?

Thomas: Yeah, well see in the sixties, I started playing bluegrass with a few people. I played it for three or four years something like that, never played any fiddle tunes much

Meade: what relation is Perry Riley to you?

Thomas: second cousin

Meade: Well he's a lot older than you.

Thomas: Yeah he's eighty

Meade: Well how is he related to you? Is he related on your mother's side of you?

Thomas: Yeah. My grandmother and Perry's father were brother and sister. She was a Riley

Meade: You told me he's had a hard time didn't you?

Thomas: Yeah he's been crippled all his life, ever since he was about his first year in school I think. He had white swelling (?) I believe is what they said what the matter with his legs, he's always had it hard Perry did.

Meade: You said his family turned against him.

Thomas: Yeah, they don't visit him now or anything

Meade: Why is that?

Thomas: I wouldn't know why. He told me I was about the only one who'd come and see him nearly of his Kinfolk.

Meade: That's too bad. Well I'm glad he's feeling better (?).

Thomas: Yeah he's practicing now on his fiddle again

Meade: Yeah I'm really glad we, I wish we'd have spent more time with him, been able to talk to him a little bit more you know.

What did he do for a living? How did he, he said he went out to West Virginia

Thomas: Yeah he worked at mines some and hoed corn for people then he went down to Arkansas and cut pulp wood, with a one man saw, it's a

Meade: What's that?

Thomas: That's a one saw you saw by yourself it's got a thing on the saw kind a like a handle like you know from end so it won't wiggle backwards and forwards when you saw. He got five dollars a core (?) for that wood. He cut two core a day I think it was down there, he stayed down there for, nobody didn't know where he was at everyone thought he was dead and finally he came back didn't know where he was at while he was gone.

Meade: Do you remember him when you, when he used to play dance when you were a little boy?

Thomas: No he used to come to our house and play is where I first seen him at it was never no dances around home through our country

Meade: There weren't square dances?

Thomas: I mean while I was growing up, back when my mother and dad they had a lot of em back in em days, but nobody never dance any at the house you know back when they did then

Meade: Why not?

Thomas: well you know I always went to you know dance halls and things like that, plays and theaters where they danced some, when they'd have a festival or something like that you know they'd have square dances

Meade: Yeah, but they didn't do the old dances in the homes anymore?

Thomas: Na-huh (No), I played for one dance. They had one in a place called Billchain (?) in Montgomery, it's right in Garrison, Kentucky, it's a holler there they had one at a house there one night, the first one and the last I ever did play at.

Meade: What happened there?

Thomas: They all got drunk and got in a fight. I never did go back anymore.

(laughing)

Meade: You've been through a lot of fights haven't ya?

Thomas: Yeah I've been where they had a lot of em.

Meade: What was that guy up in Ohio? Something like he beat up ten guys or something?

Thomas: That as Jerry Burk I never knowed where he was from, we'd been in there playing and these guys come around and picked on us and then he had ten knocked out at one time

Meade: why'd they pick on you?

Thomas: I guess they were just jealous of the musicians or something, they come and asked you'ns think you'ns smart because you'ns plays, just different things they'd say about us

Meade: what'd you say they called you a Hillbilly or something?

Thomas: yeah they'd call us Hillbillies. (laughing)

Meade: What did you think about that? I mean did it make you mad to be called that?

Thomas: I got to where I didn't pay any attention to it you'd hear that about every place you went, and this Orage (?) guy I was telling you about playing for Bill Monroe when I went spring (?) Billy said if you pay any attention to that you'd be into it, they'd say something or nother like that and I'd just never pay any attention to it.

Meade: when you would go up north and would there be a lot of that, people making you feel bad? Trying to make you feel bad? Calling you Hillbilly or something?

Thomas: Yeah

Meade: Did it make you feel bad or did you just get used to it?

Thomas: Well for a while it did but after I got used to it I didn't pay any attention to it.

Meade: I mean were you ashamed of being called?

Thomas: No. People they'd come around and they'd ask me they'd ask me what part of Alabama or Georgia and these places where I talked and I was telling him about I believe it was the last night, this one guy come up front and said which part of Georgia are you from? They got to calling me the Macon man. Every time that they introduced me they'd say here's a Macon man from Georgia and one guy sitting back there said yeah he looks like he's been eating watermelon (?) (laughing) they come back there and they had a fight over that night

Meade: You were drinking pretty heavy.

Thomas: Yeah. Yeah I drank pretty heavy at that time.

Meade: You said you made moonshine?

Thomas: Yeah I made moonshine.

Meade: How do you make it anyway?

Thomas: Well you get as wooden barrel and you buy this cracked corn and you put sugar in it and it takes it two weeks something like that to work off the first time and then you put your coil in another barrel put water over it and then you build a fire under it and boil it through that way, that steam evaporates and there's some way it makes whiskey, it comes through the copper coil

Meade: There still a lot of moonshinning going on back there.

Thomas: Yeah it's a whole lot, not like it used to be but it's a lot

Meade: How come they do that? Is it a dry county?

Thomas: Yeah

Meade: Is that why people don't buy store liquor?

Thomas: No a lot of em made it and sold it for a living, made good living from it a lot of people did. I usually just made mine to drink and give people and fiddle on, when I was having to drink when I was a fiddling.

Meade: Is moonshine better? Do you like it better than store liquor?

Thomas: In ways I did. It wasn't hot some of it wouldn't burn you and then some of it would if you didn't know how to make it good, a lot of people don't understand making moonshine good. They let their water in their barrels get hot when they're running it through and then the whiskey's just as hot as that is. If you keep you coil a lot of good clean water poured on it and fresh water your whisky's just as cold as the water is when it comes through that don't burn you like that. It takes several years to learn it good.

Meade: You said you and your brother used to moonshine.

Thomas: Yeah two of by brothers, we used to make some.

Meade: Did you ever get caught?

Thomas: No. I guess I'm the only one out of the country down there that ain't been caught around, and neither one of em ain't never. Me and a guy had up a still one time and, I won't call him name or nothing, and he was slipping back and running the whiskey out on me, we was suppose to run it out on Monday night he slipped back and was running on Sundays and the sheriff got him. They claimed they'd seen he at the still before but they waited till I wasn't along (?). That old man Stamper lived down the creek, we was talking about it, he said I seen a short guy there once or twice, said he was

started than the other guy said he'd walk on logs and rocks so he wouldn't leave any signs and I stopped and studied and dreckly he said he'd gather a big bunch of mountain teaberries and I'd known he was talking about me. He said we waited till the time was right when he was there by himself and then got him. They was fiddlers too this Stamper was his son was dead but he was deputy sheriff (?) and they had the high sheriff (?) and things there.

Meade: Joe Stamper's son was the sheriff?

Thomas: No it was Thurston Stamper

Meade: Thurston Stamper. Yeah I get em mixed up. What were the teaberries for?

Thomas: I just get em and eat em. Take em to my sisters. Little girl that was the first little girl she'd had.

Meade: They don't do anything for medicine.

Thomas: No, you know they make chewing gum out of em mountain tea (?) teaberry (?) they call it.

Meade: yeah

Thomas: I just get em and eat em, take em to her little girl.

Meade: Did you ever used to make any medicines or?

Thomas: Yeah, I've fixed, I've took this Queen of the Meadow and boil it and fix it, it's good for kidney trouble, and then ground ivy is good for sugar diabetes, it'll cure it. We took some gum off of mare (?) and rye whiskey and rock candy mixed together and it cured my dad of asthma. The doctor said he couldn't be cured there was a guy told us give him seramity (?) and we done it and it cured him and not too awful long before he died.

Meade: Where'd you learn all these remedies? From different people?

Thomas: Lloyd Kissner (?) I learned the remedy from about the asthma from him and then Thurston Stamper had an old doctor's book, herb doctor book, was named Doc Logan, I learned some out of that book.

Meade: Do you still make any of these or do you use (??)

Thomas: No, I've got some stuff gathered down there but I never have made any this winter. We dig gold (?) and seal (?) we called it yellow root down home and boy make tea out of it and take it, it's good heal your stomach when it's raw anything. It's a lot of remedies in that book but I forgot em, I'll have to look at it again.

Meade: Do you think they're as good as regular doctoring?

Thomas: Yeah some of em better I think.

Meade: Have you had trouble with doctors or?

Thomas: No not too much. I never would go to the doctor I'd put it off till the last minute, till I'd just have to or something.

Meade: What happened with this heart attack you had?

Thomas: You mean what caused it?

Meade: Yeah.

Thomas: I've been drunk for two weeks, drinking and not a sleeping any. Drinking too much whiskey I was killing one half a pint before you could take it away from my mouth throwing the bottle away.

Meade: In one gulp you'd drink it all?

Thomas: Yeap I'd just turn the bottle up, drink her down throw the bottle away and get another one. I got so it took so much to make me feel it and then when I did feel it I was knocked out.

Meade: How was your fiddling doing?

Thomas: It sounded pretty good to me but I guess it didn't sound worth anything to anybody else. I'd go to one table and drink as high as ten up to fifteen shots before I'd ever get up from a table.

Meade: Well that must take about all your money though.

Thomas: Yeah it did and I did never have to worry about drink where it was furnished for me.

Meade: For a fiddler?

Thomas: Yeah it was just when we was out so many people always come there back on a hill you couldn't get a car back there hardly, when you did get a road it'd be as high as six to ten car loads as one time wanting me to go some place with em. Then we moved up to Portsmouth, Ohio (?) to play it's called Callen (?) Holler on Kentucky side and it was the way they'd come at all times of night, all times during the day dead to last summer (?) they got to coming and I had to tell em I wasn't at home, gone some place so many people come

Meade: Where would they take you to?

Thomas: We'd go out just drink around go play and just out loafing here and there and maybe go back to Ohio or some place be got two or three days or a week before I'd ever make it back home. And then when I quite drinking I don't, when a bunch of em comes I'll have someone tell em I'm out in Indiana or some place like that.

Meade: You must have gotten some scrapes or something on some of those trips?

Thomas: Well I never did

Meade: I don't mean fights but

Thomas: No I never did have any fights myself but the other guys did. Anytime anybody jumped on me I never would have a chance to ever fight there'd always be somebody into it three or four into it, somebody mention one word and a minute somebody on em

Meade: You're pretty well protected then.

Thomas: Yeah, I mean hadn't been for my friends, I had friends any place I went, I'd get dog drunk like I'd been beat up a lot of times hadn't been for people, be down drunk. One night we went up to church and I was drunk I wasn't bothering anybody and this guy got on me and I was down on the ground and it was three or four of em and then a preacher came out of the house and got on to him for it and I was there drunk and he come out and hit him too. (laughing) I wasn't bothering anybody. I never did both anybody when I got drunk. Yeah that place of the preachers having us all thrown in jail, he came out and hit that guy over me.

Meade: What kind of churches do they have around your place? Do you ever, did you used to go to church when you were a kid much or?

Thomas: Yeah I went to a lot of em around. They had a Church of God, and then they had a, I really don't know the name as well as they called it the Holly Roller Church and I went to United Baptists, Catholic.

Meade: Catholic?

Thomas: Yeah, over in Ohio we used to play for dances, Catholic church.

Meade: That's where J.P. used to play too right?

Thomas: Yeah

Meade: What kind of singing did they used to have when you were a kid in the churches?

Thomas: When I'd go with dad and em the Baptists they'd all, the whole bunch would sing maybe the preacher, you know, would sing a verse and then he'd stop and then all of em would sing it like that I know what it was called

Meade: talk it out you mean?

Thomas: Yeah, and then they'd all sing it and then they had like quartets in other churches and then in some of em everybody sang at one time there wasn't any harmony or anything much in it.

Meade: Do they still do that with the Baptists kinda talking it out and then?

Thomas: I don't know I haven't been to a Baptist Church I haven't been to any of em for for a long time or something like a funeral or something

Meade: did they used to have music in any of the church like holly rollers?

Thomas: Yeah they'd have guitars and things like that. I played a fiddle a few times at a old school house they had church in called Golden Ridge. I went there and played some fiddle for em you know hymn songs and

Meade: Yeah, Yeah

Thomas: They claim way back they could start playing music and then they'd be off on dance tunes and everything in there. A lot of people didn't care they'd go to playing and they'd get off on dance tunes and have big fights and everything over in the churches back then.
(laughing)

Meade: Did you ever hear any fight stories about any preachers and all that or?

Thomas: It was one guy that told me it was a preacher was up preaching and you know they don't believe in buying anything or selling on Sunday and he was a preaching about that then, there was a guy come down the road and he had a big red coon hound a leading it, he told the people he was a preaching to said you'ns wait a wait a minute I'll be back and he went out and bought the dog and went back and tied him up at the church house and went back and preached. Then this same preacher

Meades: this is a true story?

Thomas: Yeah, would it hurt anything to mention his name there?

Meade: No, no.

Thomas: His name was Andy Keizer (?). He went to Greenup up there to preach and this guy seen him, him and a guy got in a fight. They said they fit all of the streets and he

went on in and preached a big sermon come out and this guy seen him and said how can you go in there and do that after having that big fight? He said when I'm preaching said I preach for the Lord when I fight I fight for Andy Keizer. (laughing) He was the one that bought the dog.

Meade: Do you ever hear of these rattle snake guys? Do they have those around there? J.P. was telling me about em. A rattle snake church. I guess he saw that one down at Harlan.

Thomas: No I've never seen any of em around home through my neighborhood.

Meade: You've heard of em, people who do.

Thomas: I've heard of em handling snakes and yeah I've heard of it. I heard on the news the other day where a guy had em for years, one bit him and he died.

Meade: Have you ever heard of thing about putting a rattle snake rattle in your fiddle?

Thomas: Yeah I've had em in my fiddle

Meade: What does that do then? Is that connected with that rattle snake religion stuff?

Thomas: No, I don't know what old timers told me is that it kept dust out of you know good going you know sliding around over the wood. It helped the dust it never did help the sound of em any or anything.

Meade: Would some say that it did?

Thomas: I've talked to a lot of old timers said it was just good to keep the dust out of your fiddle

Meade: So it didn't do anything to make it sound any better?

Thomas: nu-huh

Meade: Did you ever heard of any other ways to make the fiddle better? Besides practicing (laughing).

Thomas: I'll tell you what Joe Stamper used to do when he used to go and play of a night he'd take baby oil and rub on the strings... till I'd never go down and listen to fiddle around him any till I was up in my twenties

Meade: What did you learn from him?

Thomas: Well I've learnt all sorts (?) and I've learned some notes out of different tunes you know the way he played and em in

Meade: like what?

Thomas: Like that there *Devil in Georgia*, he played it some of that he'd call it the *Accordion Reel* (?) getting notes out that and then *Brown Button Shoes*, I learned a few of his notes in it.

Meade: who else played Brown Button Shoes?

Thomas: Marce Allen and Jimmy Wheeler

Meade: they both played it.

Thomas: yeah

Meade: Does anyone ever tell you any superstitions about fiddles or fiddling?

Thomas: Yeah there was this one guy told me it was the Devil's work. You mean something like that?

Meade: yeah

Thomas: Yeah he told me it wasn't any good he told me it was all the Devil's work

Meade: Why do you think he said that?

Thomas: I wouldn't know, he said if he was in my place he'd quit fooling with it it was the Devil's work and I said I thought I had pretty good work. But I don't believe that though myself

Meade: A Baptist wouldn't say anything like that (??)?

Thomas: Yeah, no that's a guy that don't belong to any church. But they wouldn't allow any music to be played in church or anything, like that.

Meade: I wonder why they think that?

Thomas: They said that's suppose to be played at home and things like that, and dancing.

Meade: But they didn't care if you did it. They didn't think it was the Devil's

Thomas: No they didn't think it, they said they'd read in the bible where they said you're allowed music and dancing at your own home. They went on that a lot. But I played it any place they wanted it. (laughing) Didn't make any difference to me as long as they liked to hear it I'd go play

Meade: That's probably the attitude (?)

Thomas: Yeah we'd gotten under rock cliffs and get drunk, build up big fires, snow's on and play music and stay all night under rock cliffs and play.

Meade: With snow around em you say?

Thomas: Yeah see it's cliffs that people are used to living under when their house would get burnt or something bunches of us boys would go over there maybe fifteen or twenty of us, take two or three gallon of moonshine, in a whole lot of cases be over there and stay a whole weekend, fiddle and carry on

Meade: People used to live under these cliffs?

Thomas: Yeah way back in the olden times they would, when you know the house would get burned or something, never had any place to go they'd live in there till they got the house built back

Meade: Well that must have been pretty rough?

Thomas: Yeah it's no water or snow can get back in under em they'd stand up, I guess logs and things and then nail stuff over it and you

Meade: How far back under these cliffs are there? I mean how much room do you have underneath em?

Thomas: I'd say you got ten or twelve foot maybe back under some of em more

Meade: Your whole family had a pretty rough time with your kids didn't they?

Thomas: Yeah they did they grew up real poor. I was poor, the poor folks said I was poor back then (laughing).

Meade: So tell me a little bit about it

Thomas: Back then we usually raised most everything we eat like beans, potatas, and tomatas and my dad he was sick, he worked all the time but he had to doctor so much, and we farmed, worked in log wood and things like that. We had four moulds (?) something to go to school and we had to wade the creeks and I went, what little dab I go to go, I went a lot of mornings ice to be frozen and take me forever to get thawed out good when I get there, you'd be so cold you couldn't stand it when you got there. Have to wade big snows and pull off our shoes and wade big creeks and be real cold and go on and put em back on and go on.

Meade: They didn't have school buses or anything?

Thomas: Nu-huh. Not up in the hollows, they had em out you know where you had the black top but now they have em up every holler and everything now. We had about four miles four and a half something, we had to go through all the rain we'd be wet when we got there.

Meade: What kind of school was it?

Thomas: It was a one room school

Meade: With all the grades?

Thomas: Well it went up to about the eighth grade when I went

Meade: But all those eight grade rooms go one room were in one room?

Thomas: Yeah they had when I went they had a class they called a primer, you know and then first, second and third, they had most all, you know lower grades in one side and the higher grades on the other one

Meade: How many pupils were there?

Thomas: I'd say around a hundred or two hundred something like that.

Meade: In one classroom?

Thomas: Yeah it was a pretty good sized building, my dad used to go to school there when he was a, they used to have trials in that old school house

Meade: The judge would come in

Thomas: Yeah, way back that's when he was a growing up

Meade: How many teachers did they have?

Thomas: They had one.

Meade: One for a whole hundred kids?

Thomas: yeah. Yeah.

Meade: well what did you do when the rest of the class was being, I mean the when the upper grades were being taught what did the lower grades do

Thomas: they went a head with their work you know whatever she showed em to do, they'd run off a lot of teachers, beat em up and everything when they'd get men in they'd have some big fights.

Meade: With the students?

Thomas: yeah they'd run off a lot of teachers, they just got done whatever they wanted to when I went to school, I never did get a whooping in school. I never did do anything, the bigger ones I remember seeing the teachers and the big boys fight with boards, clubs, throw rocks and everything. Rock a school house they'd break out the window lights and everything. That was the only year I went, that was my first year and then they got a, they went to hauling em the bigger ones to a place called Laurel Point, you know where they had the high school

Meade: Yeah

Thomas: all up and they had a principal and everything down there and straightened up a bunch of em, they got to send em to jail and everything. Yeah and those one horse schools we got to call it, you know one room

Meade: yeah

Thomas: and they'd beat the teachers up and everything

Meade: the big kids though?

Thomas: yeah

Meade: How big were, about how old were they?

Thomas: I imagine they were around some of em seventeen and eighteen

Meade: How come they were still going to school with everyone?

Thomas: I don't know my mother said when she went there was they went till they was twenty-one, seeing some of the awfulest looking big men ever was sitting around as ever you've looked at, weigh over two hundred pounds, great big guys. I remember

Meade: I thought most kids quite school pretty young back then

Thomas: Yeah that was the law I thing back there, they went till they was twenty-one

Meade: by law?

Thomas: yeah I think. I think so. And then it was a people beat up one school teacher and it was a bunch of Baileys that lived on this ridge and he, the teacher they get these big men in there and they up one girl from all these Bailey women went down there and hid beside the road and he was coming along on a bicycle and they jerked him off and liked to have beat him to death and one was aimed to shot him with a gun and a guy come

along and got it away from him doing the time while he was fighting and this Raeburn, Jack Raeburn was a school teacher and his mother said she didn't hate about em whooping him so bad but they tore Hobert's new dollar shirt off of him. (laughing) Yeah that was the one he was representative he finally made representative you know, like that but back that was when they was a going to school and she said she didn't care so much but they tore Hobert's new dollar shirt off of him. (laughing)

Meade: What made em so mad at the teachers

Thomas: I wouldn't know I guess just honory, means the reason and they got in one teacher, married dad's aunt (40:28) and he beat some of em till they took fits on the way home of the evenin (40:29)

Meade: now that was the teacher beating the student?

Thomas: yeah they got him in there and he liked to have killed em beat em up

Meade: that's how it was

Thomas: he'd shot em or anything before they let em out do him

Meade: he'd shot em before he'd what?

Thomas: Yeah before he'd let em you know out do him or anything. He told em he said if that's what it takes I'll shot you. Boy he was mean, he kept three or four big whips right where he could get to em, big paddles and everything

Meade: Well that would be one reason for getting mad at the teacher I guess.

Thomas: yeah

Meade: Did you have a mean teacher?

Thomas: No most all mine were good to me I never did have any trouble

Meade: How many did you have I mean

Thomas: I never did went but, let's see, I was eleven before I even got to go much my feet I couldn't walk too much good before I was eleven years old they curled over on the ground like that and I went about I think it was five years

Meade: you couldn't walk

Thomas: No we had that four miles. I went about five year something pretty close to five year off and on

Meade: to the one school, the same school

Thomas: ah-huh

Meade: and there were one hundred kids or so in the class

Thomas: yeah I imagine. No that was at Laurel Point where it was a hundred two hundred kids I went one year there before I quit

Meade: but that wasn't the one room school house

Thomas: no

Meade: well how many kids were in the one room school house?

Thomas: I imagine it was fifty or sixty maybe more best I remember. Where the hundred you know em two hundred were at that was down there at the big high school in all

Meade: and you had different classes there

Thomas: yeah they had different teachers come in I didn't never go to high school I just went partly through the sixth grade

Meade: did you feel like, did you ever have a time in school where you thought you were learning something that was really important that give you some kind of ambition about something, what you wanted to do or anything like that?

Thomas: no I never

Meade: a teacher who'd been some place or done something

Thomas: yeah I I always wanted to be a carpenter and things like that and I never did they'd tell me about you know all the jobs they'd make and my condition one teacher did that was when I was in the fourth and her name was Carrie Duncan and she got down and said, he had me bring my fiddle to school one time and said if I was in your place said I'd practice and make my living playing fiddle, said after that

Meade: I hadn't heard anyone else mention this, I didn't know that you had trouble walking

Thomas: Yeah I didn't walk to do any good till I was eleven

Meade: What do you mean you didn't walk around any good? Did you walk around just a little bit?

Thomas: Yeah couldn't I'd give out I couldn't walk very far at a time, you know go on long trips you know like going a mile or two miles. I saw a doctor name is Boon Morgan doctored me he said I had Rickets or something like that when I was little. All the rest of em, most of em went to school but I never got to go much

Meade: How did he cure ya?

Thomas: He gave me syrup or D-capsules (?) he called it I don't know I don't remember myself he give me a lot of medicines and you know a I got straightened up

Meade: Did Leona (?) did she go to the same school?

Thomas: No you went to Laurel Point school didn't ya? Did you ever go to Rose?

Leona (?): my first yea

Thomas: did ya?

Meade: How much, how old, how much, I don't want to ask how old you are (laughing) compared to Buddy

Leona: Well I'm 31 (?)

Meade: So your pretty much younger

Leona: (in background talking) (45min)

Meade: You went to this one room school on year

Leona: one year

Meade: How was it that some girls and boys were in school? Did the girls pretty much sit with the girls and the boys with the boys?

Leona: They were always together

Meade: They also said that you had some accident when you were really young

Thomas: Yeah I got hit in the head my sister hit me when I was two weeks old with an overall buckle, right there, my mother was afraid they were gonna have me operated on they were afraid, you know the old timers was, that stayed on there till I was twenty-seven year old then I had Dr. Benet take it off in Portsmouth, Ohio.

Meade: You mean the buckle was in your head?

Thomas: No she just hit me with it throwing it at my mother, she was three years old, no she didn't know any better, things like that. They told me that maybe three year I'd been dead it would have probably went on through my

Meade: Well what was in your head?

Thomas: There was some kind of a cist I think they never told me but they took it out and put it in alcohol and show it to me and it had roots on it that long, they took one up plum up in here and one back on my head (?). It really hurt all my face got blood shot and everything for years I never had to have it operated for long time

Meade: You were pretty sick a lot when you were little

Thomas: yeah, yeah and then I had soft place in my head, I got some there and really ain't healed up yet and when I get out in the hot sun you can see it. My nose bled all the time and you can see my hair, every time my heart beats you can see my hair jump too. You know when my heart will beat. My head was split wide open when I was born just the skin he said holding it together. The doctor told me.

Meade: Now it's grown together by now hasn't it?

Thomas: yeah, yeah after

Meade: You still get sick in the hot sun?

Thomas: Yeah if I get too hot my nose bleeds. Bout four hours and fifteen minutes one time it bled, did it in the winter time and I liked to a bled to death before I got to a doctor. I was about as heavy as I am now and I lost so much blood I just went down straight didn't weigh over a hundred and twenty-five or thirty probably.

Meade: When was this?

Thomas: About sixty four I think bout sixty-four, five somewheres along there. I remember when we was a going to Rose school back then it was an old one room school if people didn't fire crackers to shot on Christmas Eve, now it was just like it was on Christmas a bunch of em had em the boys and the bigger ones would get out and shot em on the school ground, now old Miss Duncan she was mean and we had an old iron shove, had a lid on top of it you know you unfacen so you could move it around, she forgot about it and she took my fire crackers, she searched me for em, well I hated to give em up it was all the money I had to get any with, she had a great big bunch of em like that then she took away from em she took em and said, "give em here" just sassy, throwed em in the fire, boy they went to going off and em capes went to going off and took off out the door and said "Run children run! Everything's a blowing up around here!" (laughing) Yeah she wouldn't that smart herself she just took, she was mad and just threw em all in the fire like that. (laughing) "Run children run everything's a blowing up around here," she said. Fire was just a flying all over the school room.

Meade: That's probably better than lighting your fire crackers anyway to see all that going on

Thomas: Yeah I was afraid to laugh I was afraid she'd use a big whip on me.

Meade: Did she ever beat ya?

Thomas: No she never did whoop me

Meade: But other kids she did.

Thomas: No, yeah some of em she did

Meade: But you wasn't as mean as some of em.

Thomas: No I never did get a whooping in school, I don't think you ever did either

Leona: She cracked my hand with a pencil one time.

Thomas: She did
(laughing)

Meade: What did you do to get your hand cracked with a pencil?

Leona: some first graders told on me(?)

Thomas: I remember seeing her go down the hall and the first graders had to big long pencils and he'd crack em up top of the head the first thing in the morning and straighten em up

Meade: What they do just teach reading and arithmetic and that's it?

Thomas: Yeah they had, let's see spelling and reader and arithmetic, geography book

Meade: You didn't talk out your lessons or anything how did you do your lessons

Thomas: We'd have to read em out of the book, and she'd give us numbers and things like that to do and we'd have to do em and work em out. If we didn't get our spelling we'd have to stay in and never get to go out and play till we got em, we'd watch careful (laughing) our problem we had to get or we didn't get to go play

Meade: Did your father make you work?

Thomas: Yeah, he believed in working I had to work just the same as the rest of em

Meade: Well how did you do it if you couldn't hardly walk?

Thomas: Oh I was after I got up you know past eleven, they used to grow corn there and you know plant it was the old time planter and they'd stove it in the ground like maybe it'd be five or six grains of corn come out and you'd have to go through there and pull that all out but two stalks and that's what I first started out on. You'll bend over all day in the hot sun and my nose would go to bleeding. I'd wait long enough till my nose quit bleeding and then I'd go back in and do it again

Meade: Oh my.

Thomas: He had it hard you know if it hadn't been for us I don't know how he could have made it hardly. Had ten in the family. He worked hard all of his life. He'd work ten hours and then get up at three o'clock and walk to the mines and put in ten hours and cut wood of a night things like that to grow his family up. I've heard people say on his bibbed overalls you know that he used to wear, he'd pull em off and they'd stand up in the floor of a night cause there'd be so much ice froze on em. He was a big strong man he had to be strong he couldn't have stood all that could he? He weighed 264 and 5 along like that

Meade: I thought you said he had what asthma?

Thomas: Yeah in his older days he got it. He broke a record in Hoover's time a loading fire clay, he didn't know he'd done it and they sent a, the company sent a five dollar gold piece anybody who could beat Harv Thomas loading clay, load more

Meade: Yeah

Thomas: But it was Nit(?) and two more guys tried but he beat em

Meade: Did he get the five dollar gold piece?

Thomas: Yeah

Meade: When did you do you're work(?) ? Mostly in the summer time?

Thomas: Yeah winter get wood or anything we used to have to go cut our wood like they're doing now down home since the gas, they can't get any. We'd take old crosscuts and chop and have to get up in the snow and in the rain and cut it, that's some good old days though

Meade: what?

Thomas: I thought that was some good days, I had a good time

Meade: Back in the old days?

Thomas: Yeah cutting wood.

Meade: Did you have a good time when you were a kid? Were you happy?

Thomas: Yeah

Meade: Having to work all the time?

Thomas: Yeah seems like that was my happiest days back then, seems like the summer never past off when I back home under my dad's thumb you know a workin and after I got up you know in my twenties now seems like the time just flies any more, I don't know where the summer goes to. I thought it never would pass back in em days, we'd have to go to fields and work and come in for dinner and then go back and work up till dark again.

Meade: Was you dad a hard man? Was he hard on you kids?

Thomas: Yeah he was pretty hard on us. He was awful strict on us too. He didn't believe in stealing or anything like, if one of em you know ever stole anything he beat it like beating a horse he wouldn't let it stay at home if it did anything like that much. I don't blame him I don't believe that either.

Meade: yeah. So he didn't have much time for his banjo playing then?

Thomas: No he didn't play too much. I didn't get to play too much when I was home when we was a farmin, stuff like that, see they went to bed early and you couldn't sit up you know and play you had to get up early the next morning, go hunt the mules or something like that. We'd go, we'd get up just barely coming day light through the summer time I'd go hunt the mules and drive em in the harness and then we'd plow corn, tobacco, cane and stuff like that.

Meade: Did you enjoy doing all that work?

Thomas: Yeah I liked it, it was hard but I did I enjoyed it a lot of the time, it kept you in good condition and everything

Meade: What did you do for entertainment?

Thomas: You mean like when people come or something?

Meade: Well just you know to relax or

Thomas: No we didn't have much time

Meade: You mean you wouldn't sit around and tell stories or anything?

Thomas: Of a night sometimes we would I used to be scared to death to see if there was mad dogs going through the country. There for a long time I wouldn't hardly get out of the house, of the night there was so many mad dogs going through the country, yeah I'd sit up of a night old times come, to hear em tell bear stories about killing bears and about haunted houses and stuff like that

Meade: Do you remember any of those old stories?

Thomas: Yeah there was an old man by the name of Lit Dark (?) come there one time in the holler over from home he said the last bear he remembered was killed in that county, he was a guy hunting jingsing he come met in this holler and him and his dog killed it oh he beat on it with that hoe and it was you know trying to kill him, he beat on the bear and that dog and he finally killed the bear

Meade: with a hoe?

Thomas: Yeah, and it was a guy buy the name of Garm Dare (?) they claim killed one with his fists one time, they met in the middle of the road and he was awful big (?) man and they got into it and hit up under the arm I mean under the leg of the bear and killed it.

Meade: hitting it with his fists?

Thomas: Yeah

Meade: Do you think somebody could do that?

Thomas: Well it's another guy killed one they had in a cage and things name of Zach Harm (?) he's an awful strong man they got in there you know to box with a bear and he hit it and killed it.

Meade: I heard you say the last bear, aren't there still bear around there?

Thomas: Yeah you see or hear of one coming though now and again they've turned loose a lot of em to around there you know since they've got to making these dams and reservoirs things they've turned loose and it always was a maybe every once in a while you hear of a bear coming though that country.

Meade: what kinds of animals do they have back there?

Thomas: They've got deer, coon and foxes, wildcats stuff like that, minx, weasel, and there's been a panther or two seen like that and through the country every once in a while

Meade: What other stories would they tell, the old timers?

Thomas: I can't remember all of em I remember one woman said she never had any light to travel by and mad dogs, you know was thick at that time and just mad every place, she was going had one of those old lights, you know oil lamps

Meade: yeah

Thomas: had a chimney(?) on top of em we used to call em globes she it was a dog run it was a mad dog rared up jump she was up on a fence run up and she it over the head and broke and got it on fire it run off or somethinger she told it, well

Meade: There were, did people get bit by these dogs all the time?

Thomas: yeah, yeah I was talking to a lady a while back he cousin I believe it was got mad I mean got dog bit and went mad they had to strap her in her bed and she just bit big pieces of hunks out of her arms everything and then I heard mother and all of em talking about there was a guy got mad dog bit one time and I forget how many years it was after it and he got feeling funny and he told his wife take the children told em he believed he was going mad told em told her to get ropes and tie him to the bed posts said believe he was going mad and she slipped back and looked in, said take em and go to your mother and daddy said he looked back and he was just biting himself and blood was running out of him and said he got loose that night out and they found him he just chewed himself and bit had all the meat off his arm where he bit himself like that. Then Dr. Boon Morgan had a cow went mad he'd get right in there with her they said she'd whirl around had her self a log barn made up of big logs and she'd turn around in that big barn so hard he'd knock her horns, just out with the roots and he got in there trying to give her stuff and her mad like that, you know thought she wasn't mad trying to give her medicine, he was a doctor and that cow mad, she died in nine days.

Meade: Well I take it they cleared all that up they don't have those

Thomas: Well about, how many years ago has it been since my sister's dog went mad, they had one little Chewelabs you know that everyone keeps in the house, that thing went mad right in the house it never been, they know'd of a dog biting it and my nephew grabbed a blanket off of the bed and throwed over it and put it in a barrel, it died in nine days and they took it's head and sent it away and said it was mad, had rabies.

Meade: You remember those bats getting rabies?

Thomas: yeah I've heard of em.

Meade: One got in a house

Thomas: Yeah it could. And I had some coon dogs, I'd been offered sixty dollars a piece for em, and there was a mad dog come through the country and bit em and went on and bit different dogs and hogs and there was a guy by the name of Art Stevens finally killed it. And then my dad killed, I had one black and tan one there went mad and he had to get

up of a night one night and killed it, had it chained to a building it jumped as high as the roof of the building on there big dog was, it eat up tore up cardboard boxes and just it up like it was bread or something nother, while it was mad, his eyes got real green

Leona: (?)

Meade: I was gone back to Talito, Ohio when that happened, I was gone

Leona: All I heard was a shotgun go off, but one time I had

Thomas: My mother got scared of the mad dogs, they couldn't get in the house but she even went plum up the stairs and slap nailed the screen, we had screen over the windows but they had a nail plank over em and everything she got so nervous over that

Meade: Suppose a guy got bit they couldn't cure him?

Thomas: Yeah they had a thing they called a mad stone they used to take people to and you know and they used to fiddle that or put it on the place and draw out the rabies.

Meade: A mad stone?

Thomas: Yeah they had to order em, get em, I was talking to a guy by the name of Shirman Morgan down there a while back he said that he went to Leatherwood with a guy that got mad dog bit, it's a place called Leatherwood, said he'd seen one mad stone in his life. They put that on that bit and to draw that out

Meade: They didn't have doctors that you could go to?

Thomas: No not to close. This fiddlers by the name of George Coal he was a wasn't too bright and it was a guy had got mad dog

Meade: They were wondering whether or not he monkey may have had rabies

Thomas: Yeah

Meade: They decided not to give me the shots, to just wait and see. I didn't get rabies so (laughing). Tell em about the horses you're in

Thomas: Well it's a place up there on a guy's farm by the name of Willis Riles used to be living in that country, and it's a rock cliff there, from that rock cliff to the cemetery they you see stuff and hear it all the time it'd be horses run past ya, you could hear em and it sound like a horse, you know but you never could see em. And it's been people seen there with no heads on they claimed and there's a guy living back home now by the name of Tom Sammons he won't go through that place after dark now and he's sixty-seven years old. He clamed he seen a cow run down from there one time, that rock cliff and jump over, it didn't have no head, he run back to his stepfather's and knocked that

door opened latch and all with his shoulder getting in. And then there was a guy by the name of Lit Dar (?) he was up, I imagine in his eighties when he was a telling me this, said he used to ride horses through, a big black horse through the cemetery, you know where the road when down below the cemetery, said there'd be a shadow, looked like a big man get on behind him and the horse'd just barely walk, it'd go so far and get off and then when he come back it'd get on, said the horse could just barely walk. I believe he told the truth about it he was an awful good person

Meade: When he was riding it'd just get off?

Thomas: Yeah. My grandfather Jimmy Richmond, a fiddle player, was coming through there one night and he had some groceries, you know they had baskets eggs and things where they went to a old grocery said there was two men stepped out from behind a tree looked in his basket and searched it and then he looked around and they was gone, just no longer than that, over there by that rock cliff, and then my uncle Alby he said he could hear somebody digging in the rock with a pick, he never could hear it only when he was with his brother Tom Richmond, that was my other uncle and they'd go up to the rock said you could hear plum up to the rock and then it would quit, sounded like somebody digging with a pick. And Adler Fan (?) the one I learned Possum from up at the cemetery said he was going through there one moon shinny night and said it was a guy down below the road just running backwards and forwards through the timber and he'd asked him, you know who it was and wasn't no body answered him, said just run in front of him like that and he got to shooting at him, he just kept doing that, he said he knew right then it wouldn't nobody. Knew it wouldn't no human. Said this man run along the lower side of the road, and people see quail, hear em there of a night, never did see em and running backwards and forwards up the road, they'd take lights but they never could see em

Meade: Now have you ever heard? You heard

Thomas: I heard the baby a crying when I was small is all ever I've heard. My older brother, him and his wife that's when they were first married they lived over the hill from us and we was all in bed, it was during summertime and dad was working in the clay mines and he was too and they come over there for something, he told em to get up he heard a little baby crying he said somebody had left a baby, you know went off and left it we all got up and listened and boy it'd make cold chills run over you, you could hear it just scream and crying, my dad you know he went through there to work all the time from two to three o'clock you know in the morning he'd get up and walk by carbide lights to the clay mines, he said "I ain't never heard nothing like that I've heard all kinds of varmints," they'd call em like cats and said that's a baby they went over there and never could find it and they had two dogs that'd run anything, they took a shotgun each morning they never could find it. The summer before last there was a boy moved out of Ohio, Busaras, Ohio there and he heard it. He thought it was his neighbor's baby crying he went out to his house and it wasn't out there, and two of my nephews heard something screaming there, sounded like a baby, one rainy dad. It's another guy lives in Mansfield, Ohio said when he lived there, see it's been heard for years, whether it's truth or not, but he said it was, Dillard Duncan he said he went over there, you know back then that was

before there was any bottled gas or electric, electricity through our country, said he went over there to dig up some dry poles you know for wood to cut up to you know home comfort, and that baby went to crying said and he seen it said it was a little boy he had on a pair of little blue overalls, you know there was an old house been burned down there in time he said this little boy would lay down there on this rock and cry and then he'd raise up, and he run to the house. And then I got another brother something got after one night, screaming run him in, said he never had any light, see we just traveled around those ridges, wonder we never got snake bit different times and he thought he wasn't getting no place in his shoes, he jerked his shoes off and the next day he went with my dad and he was sixteen then anyway in the neighborhood of two hundred pounds and when they come back from work he said his feet had dug down in the sand that fur getting away, it got right up on him nearly he said sounded like it say, "I'm sure going to get ya this time." (laughing) He never would go though there and then my brother one Densy (?) said he was coming through there one night and there was this big white thing just raised up and he went, he always carried a pistol and he went to shooting at it and he said he never would bother with that no more. Yeah he always carried a gun he was one of em I guess who was kindly more afraid than the rest of em was. Then my sister claims, swears straight up and down, she was coming through there, you know where em old houses had been burned, I reckon there'd been somebody murdered at one time and it was woman had to go through a fence said this woman had on, looked like a robe of some kind, and said you know she looked up and she was a standing there by the fence, it was a wire fence said she asked her, "said you want to go through first or me," said that woman never did say anything she went on and the women when through and said when she turned back around, it was right out in the middle of a big fields though, the woman wasn't there. She come running over the hill a screaming and a crying. I remember that. But I go through there all the time at nights now but I always take a shotgun with me, buck shots, slugs, you know like you kill deers I fox hunt in here and go release my hounds but I most of the time take a gun with me. I'm around em ridges all after night every place

Meade: It's always one area, just?

Thomas: Yeah just in em two area where they heard and seen that stuff. I don't, it's been everything they claim seen over that at you know that other place where, right out on, around from that old house you know where you come this time it's just straight across from there, that place that cemetery, and I'll tell you another place my dad's telling about old timers telling him about it, what happened there it's a place named Croft Camp (?) next to I-64 you know goes through there.

Meade: Yeah.

Thomas: It's right beside that used to be a house there and they claim it used to be a big ball of fire looked like it come out of the sky and hit there beside of the house, burst all to pieces and fire just go everyways. Billy Joe Rose told me him and Charles Herbert Gillum had been to Olive Hill hitchhiking and watch movies they said they seen, told me you wouldn't believe this but I saw something, big ball of fire one night it just come out

of the sky and burst and said that's when all up in that house and everyway, said they run all the way home. He's down there, he's not too awful older guy I'd say he's in his forties, and that was back when they was a hitchhiking to watch and walking to Olive Hill watching movies then

Meade: And you've just heard this baby cry didn't ya?

Thomas: Yeah that's all I ever heard, that was enough.

Meade: What?

Thomas: That was enough for me

Meade: (laughing)

Thomas: But I'll tell ya used to when I'd go on a (?) to church and loafing around to my neighbors and my cousins I'd come up there and, I'd dread to come through that place and I'd go down another hill and climb another hill, walking well it'd be two miles out there away nearly to keep from going though that place, but everytime I'd I didn't think I'd just go right on through it when I drank I didn't care I'd go right through it I didn't care if I did see anything, then but when I sober when I come up there I'd doge em places, a lot of the times and then others times it didn't bother me. I've never seen anything there

Meade: Didn't it kinda scare ya to walk alone by yourself?

Thomas: Yeah I'll tell ya the truth in that cemetery other there where they seen that stuff of a night when I go though there it's cold chills goes over me, but I've usually got a gun with me, shotgun and dogs

Meade: Can you show me where you heard the baby?

Thomas: Yeah

Meade: Where they saw that child?

Thomas: Yeah that's right there where I growed up at.

Meade: Have you Leona seen anything yourself?

Leona: no

Thomas: The last guy I ever know who heard the horse run he said it run through a fence right beside of him he couldn't see it and he had a good light was a boy from down toward Vanceburg, he come up in our country and he got to staying around down there you know with us, he was a distant cousin of my dad's and it was Floyd Dar (?), he got to

dating this girl around the ridge you know we'd growed up together just like you know cousins or something to us and I went around there one night we was aiming, I stayed all night with him to up early me and Cleve Riles (?) son, Kenith to go squirrel hunting over in Laurel country they called it, he said "Bud why don't you walk back around home with me" and I said I ain't going to do it I said there ain't nothing to hurt ya I said I travel these ridges all the time, the next morning her mother, I mean this Rile boy's mother you know before day light breakfast, we call it down there and she saw a fire built up out there and she got her husband Cleve Rile out of bed and said there's a big fire out there in the road says there's somebody out there, said might be a bunch of drunks or something nother. She said when the light come on this boy come and knocked on the door, it was in the fall of the year, it was cold he come back and told us he was going out there by that ridge by a big rock cliff, said "I was going a long" and said "starting to go though that fence," and there'd been other people heard it, said "it was a horse come up though there running said and I turned around and was aiming to run and it run right through the wire fence and never did touch it said and I shined my light and never could see it and I went up to that big rock cliff up there" and that was the end he got scared and run back out there and built him up a fire and stayed inside of that house

Meade: You ever heard of anybody getting hurt by one of these things?

Thomas: uh-huh. No nobody never did get hurt. My uncle Jack Richmond was coming though a place called Rocky Nob right about that cemetery said it was a big fox hound he thought it was Tom Dar's fox hound, he'd been out to the grocery, he said he went to talking to it like that and cracked his fingers you know like people will turned around, said he turned around and the dog was gone and they never could see it any place.

Leona: what was that thing that ran (?)

Thomas: Oh that was dad's uncle, lets see it was Dan Gillum or some of em, my dad was telling me about back during em times all that was seen and heard, he said he had a dog that always went with him, a big dog no body could bother him or anything this dog you know would get on em before, maybe grab em by the throat or anything, it was a big dog. Said this dog come to a big log it had to cross over in the road, he put both feet up on the log and said he wouldn't go on over it and he tried to hiss him and he wouldn't go, said he wouldn't afraid of anything, said he walked up and there laid something white, in the road looked like a cow, never had any head on it said all at once it just went up and said all of a sudden the timber, it was just like a wind storm, it was parted back like that it had the awfulest racket, said and then the dog went on through and they went on to the house, they run to the house. (laughing)

Meade: (laughing)

Thomas: He said the timber it just sounded like a big wind storm come up all at once, said it looked like a big white cow laying in the road with no head on it. That makes two guys claim they seen that, but you know it was at a different place there, but all everybody figures there've been some people murdered there, you know at that rock cliff

and took around to that cemetery or something, back in the olden times you heard stuff like that all the time about where'd people been murdered.

Meade: You don't know about that murder though?

Thomas: About who'd been murdered or anything?

Meade: Yeah.

Thomas: No, nobody never knowed, and where I was telling you about Trough Camp in Carter County, where seen that ball of fire, they claim some Halls used to live, Halls down through that country you know was most of ems mean, they claimed it was a soldier boy come through there way back during em times, and had a lot of money and they killed him put him in a well there and that was why that was seen. Said they found bones in that well after they cleaned it out. Human bones.

Meade: So do you think some of this stuff is ghosts of some of these people got killed, haunting the place?

Thomas: Yeah, I think he said, people said according to the bible back in em days it says in the bible it's signs and wonders, you know things to be seen and heard you know back, but I don't think it's now a days said you'd seen signs and wonders, you know people see em like that and they'd wonder what it was and stuff. And that's been about fifteen year ago something like that since I last known anyone heard the horse run

Meade: How come you figure they don't have so many now a days?

Thomas: I don't know but they don't never hear much like that too much, this guy heard the horse, he didn't live to be too old a person

Meade: But you don't know any reason why it should die out?

Thomas: No. He was up in his twenties when he died wouldn't he? Something like that.

Meade: Anybody say they can communicate with the dead?

Thomas: No, I've never heard of any talk down there, everybody'd be scared about it they'd run (laugh) wouldn't go back through there they'd get scared. I'll tell you one they told but I know it wasn't the truth, they said one time this guy could throw his voice and he was in Indiana and said this old guy moved there, he could throw his voice, you've heard people do that said and everybody would move in next door to him they wouldn't stay very long, said he'd throw his voice over there and they thought that the place was haunted, and said there was a guy come from some town out there and said "I'm not afraid of anything," brought a gun, brought him a big oh box of cigar and brought him a newspaper said he sat on the porch talking to this guy living next door, said and he waiting till the sun was going down said a big oh cat tried to cross the porch

and looked up that guy said about the time he looked up at him said he threw his voice right up from under the cat said “won’t be nobody here tonight but me and you will it?” He said “What?” said “won’t be nobody here tonight but me and you” and he said by God you wait until I get my hat and there won’t be nobody here but you either (laughing) There was a guy throwing his voice, yeah he bought the place he kept everybody run out though, they thought the place was haunted. I heard em telling about this one too, was suppose to be true but I don’t know where it was at, said everybody would move in this house, this guy would sell this place and they’d let him have it back for nothing nearly and said it’d be a coffin, you know a casket and somebody’d come peck on the door and open it and there come that big coffin go out, this man would open the door said one guy said “I’ll stay there” and they said as soon as this guy you know was selling the place and he’d dress up you know put on a big white robe, and he had this big colored guy up under the coffin crawling and this guy shot right through the coffin and killed him, and kicked the coffin over and there was a colored guy and he run and got away, the one who’d been a doing that he’d get the place back for nothing nearly

Meade: Yeah

Thomas: They said that was true that he shot right down through the middle of that casket and killed a big colored guy up under there crawling along

Meade: What was he in there for?

Thomas: You know scaring other people so that

Leona: Underneath the coffin

Thomas: so that the guy could have the place back real cheap

Meade: Oh I see the same thing the ventriloquist was doing.

Barbara Edwards: Buddy that makes me, there was something I was wondering you know when you were talking about you going to a place where you thought there were some kind of ghosts or spirits and you always took your gun with you, I think you mentioned somebody else doing that, and I wondered what would the gun, I mean if someone if somebody was a ghost would a gun do any good? (laughing)

Thomas: No

Meade: Or would you just scare em off with the noise?

Thomas: No I keep a gun I’m afraid I might run into something in em hills

Edwards: You mean you take the gun along because you’re afraid you might run into some animal or something

Thomas: Yeah and a lot of times I've often studied that that could be some kind of big cats or something

Edwards: yeah

Thomas: Making em noise too

Edwards: So the gun wasn't really for the ghosts.

Thomas: No not for ghosts. I've always maybe thought that could be some kind of varmints too, you know and I'm kindly afraid of em, a lot of people didn't take no gun but I'm going to be really if it's an animal or some kind of

Edwards: Yeah a wildcat can make a noise that sounds like a human being

Thomas: Yeah, yeah my dad killed a house cat on time, it was our own cat been gone for a year, it was one Sunday morning it was a screaming like a woman, he got up and said "I hear a woman screaming up there" we had a good coon dog and the sun was just a coming up you could see that raise up and scream, it just echoed in the hollers, you know we lived back up on the top of the hill, and it'd go right down em holler just sounding like a woman a screaming, and when it got a little lighter it raised up and he shot at it with a rifle, we seen it go up on a rock and he went up there and put the dog and went up there and it was big old blue house cat it was our own cat a doing that, been gone over a year

Edwards: Yeah I've heard a cat out in the wild sound just like a person.

Thomas: Yeah and then a fox can scream and sound like a person, when this guy, but this is where that baby had cried it's been seen back when my grandmother was you know heard, back there when she was a young girl, on down through to when I was a small body we heard it and then they heard it the summer before last. It couldn't have been an animal doing it, it couldn't have been a living that old, and this guy claimed he saw it you know this little boy with a pair of blue overalls on. He told it to me for real I reckon it was the truth surly he wouldn't have made up something like that

Edwards: Were there any stories about any children that were lost back in there?

Thomas: Well they claim it was a woman and a baby murdered there at that house and that's a well around the back over that old hill there they claim it's been a woman, when you go through there of a night I never, you can see her raise up out of that well have a little baby in her arms, it plum behind that turn from where that screaming always went on, and I've heard that told too. Told they killed em there at the house and then took em around to that well. I knowed of one guy that was killed there in olden times is a older woman he was suppose to marry this older woman, he was a nice looking young guy and he wasn't going to marry and she shot him and killed him, shot him in the back with a

shotgun. He got to working for her there on the farm, he was leaving and she killed him. He was a Jordan. That happened in that same old field there too.

Meade: Was there much killing out back there in the olden days?

Thomas: Yeah it's been some went on, two down there not too awful long ago, it was a boy killed and thrown in the creek and laid there a week, before they ever found him, never did find out who done it and then, I'll say five, it ain't been five years ago for that Rose boy was murdered. That was Bernie Rose. Has it been five year?

I heard the gun fire twiced that killed him, I was out at the spring you know ran out from under a big rock cliff there's real good water, it's fresh, run and I'd go out there and get that water and drink it, I liked it. I wondered why it was just little you could just barely like see your hand and I was using that light and I could hear that gun fire and I wondered why somebody was shooting so late and then the next morning I heard about em, this guy had pulled time for murder, he'd pulled twenty-one years and then this other guy brought him Vanceburg, they was into it over a woman down there, brought him down there and he had come around the house with a shotgun and this guy, never had seen him before, he was sitting there in a car with double magnum buck shot and he shot this guy and it picked him up off of the ground and it carried him drove him again into that little house. Seven of em went in him the, and he got twelve year, I heard that trial he got twelve year out of that.

Meade: Only twelve years for killing someone?

Thomas: yeah

Meade: Did you ever have a situation where you thought someone was going to kill you?

Thomas: Yeah, one time down there by the graveyard there I'd been loafing around and the hollers are tough and these guys would bring me and let me out and it was car sitting there by this bridge and it had brush all up around it, somebody'd cut and put around it and the moon was shinning you could see you know the glass, I always figured it was somebody loading a load of moonshine, you know back then you get two or three years in the pen just according to work you know some of the judges wanted to give you, and this guy followed me and I turned around and I walked backwards on the road and I got me two big rocks, he followed me, and they was doing a log job there sold out of boundary timber you know these guys had come in this country bought it and I knowed they were into that ground nearly and when I come around this bend he was still a following me you know in the moon shine and then in the shad of the tree it'd be dark in under there

Meade: Yeah

Thomas: And when I got to that curve I knowed where they'd been snaking these log up off of this hill, when I got there I wheeled around and got up that hill, and I hid, he went on up the road a following, and there was a Duncan boy claimed a guy followed him like

that one day, but I figured it was just people loading moonshine afraid somebody might kill over something like that. I never did that's the first time

Meade: Would they had killed even if you weren't doing anything?

Thomas: Yeah his people didn't care for anything they'd, they'd kill ya for ten dollars or anything. A lot of people who came through that country would, never know where they went to or who they was. Karl Duncan's another guy down said a man followed him from that cemetery one time there and he run and got away from em, when I come right in this curve, you know right below where Eugene Ray built a new, and he'd still back he'd get over there in those shady places you know I'd call em it'd be dark. I walked backwards I won't lie about it I wouldn't ever turn my back I had me two big rocks and I said if you come up on me I'd knocks every brain out you got, and he never did say a word and I walked backwards that fur and when I got there boy I threw those rocks down and boy you walk about running up that pass buddy I did. (laughing) I figured he might have a gun you know drive me up there and then going to shot me and leave me, laying afraid I was going to get some way to revenue men or something

Meade: Well some people are really mean like that.

Thomas: Yeah

Meade: When I got to know where that path was, they was snaking em logs off of that hill and he was a pretty good peeper I seen him step over from behind you know in a dark place son I throwed em I up that point like a cat, of some kind, I heard him and boy he went up the road a running then and he went up the road then when he went up the main road way the way I walked and run, trying to over take me

Edwards: Did they ever have any feuding around where you lived?

Thomas: No not much no. Yeah I told him if you up on this mountain I'll knock every brain out you got here and I walked backwards I got my chance, I throwed em rocks down and I outrun a fox up that hill.

Meade: Did you ever hear about any feuding I mean over in that area? I mean like the Tollivers and the

Thomas: Yeah it was a Stamper and Underwood war went off there, Joe Stamper's daddy I think got it settled some way. It come up about steeling horses it'd be a bunch of stealing, let on the Stampers by you know the Underwoods and it was a lot of killing went on where that, Joe Stamper's uncle killed seven men with one rifle and he let my dad's uncle Manafy Logan by marriage, married his aunt, have that rifle, he said every time Marian Stamper come there to his house before he could come off of his horse he'd call for that gun and look at it before he'd even put his feet on the ground. Said and certain times it'd look like blood on that gun. That's old Joe's uncle killed all em guys, and then he killed a Penelman (?) guy, he sat in the woods and waited, I don't know how

he was mixed up in it. He had a baby on his lap, rocking it and he said he couldn't kill him with a baby on his lap and when he went and took the baby in the house and came back and sat down on the porch he killed him. Marian Stamper did. Was a Penelman.

Meade: Started over a horse

Thomas: Yeah it first got started over a horse stealing

Meade: Why wouldn't he get off the horse before he saw the gun?

Thomas: I wouldn't know. Dad said his uncle told him he'd never get off till he called for that gun, they had to bring it out, he killed seven men with seven Underwoods and then killed that Penelman guy with it, and Joe told me the Underwoods would get a those mountains down there and shot at em, his daddy never was into it no way and he took a white flag he said and they told him to hold it and Taylor Stamper said he was never into it anyway and he told em how when they got to tracking down, em guys were stealing horses called that feud between the Stampers and the Underwoods. He said his daddy had a big fields of corn he had em plowed out, you know that the only way they had to making it, you know growing their own stuff, he said he plowed part a way in a field and he plowed out a little and they'd shoot at him, didn't know what one of the Stampers was and he plowed a little too fur and they shoot his plow handle off once and he went to the house that time. (laughing) That was Joe he can tell you about it when you come down, he can tell you a lot about it. He's told me some stuff about it

Edwards: What happened to the man who shot all those people, did he go to trial for it?

Thomas: No, he'd always get in the woods and do it

Edwards: And they didn't know for sure that he did it?

Thomas: Yeah they killed some Stampers too, but he'd get in the brush where they couldn't see him and then he'd kill em. Go and you know watch em when they'd go out of their house and kill him that way too

Meade: But the law didn't know about it

Thomas: No

Meade: What was the law like back, like the sheriff and em did they pay much attention to what was going on?

Thomas: No I really don't know that was so fur back. My grandfather killed seven men, but they sent him away he went crazy

Meade: This was your

Thomas: Abe Thomas

Meade: The one from England?

Thomas: Yeah, and his uncle Jim Thomas. Maurice Allan and em knowed em, before you know they got out into our country where he'd grown up they claim he killed so man, they said Thomas was a good guy hard working, they was all hard working, when anybody bothered em they'd just go plum crazy kill ya, I said Abe Thomas killed seven men, that you know people had trace of he killed. Then there was a boy, he was making cross ties as a Duncan boy, come and they said gave him a big pole and every time he'd bend over, to hit his railroad tie at he'd jab him and he kept a telling him, he took a chopping axe and cut him right across the back through there and just come a hair to killing him, I mean not with a rod axe they used to hit the ties with, he come near to dying over that

Meade: There isn't any killing like that now a days?

Thomas: No. I don't know they must have had to have a temper awful back to do.
(silence)

Yeah it's sill some rough people in our country do that but I don't associate with em, they'll burn you up or anything

Edwards: Yeah did you hear about that this woman got mad at some other woman about something it was about ten dollars and this woman didn't owe it and she poured gasoline on her and set her on fire and killed her and they put her in the penitentiary for four years?

Leona: She's out now her daughter is (?)

Thomas: Joe Stamper told me it was a guy in our country there in Lewis County, it was two or three Bill Stones, one of em they called Black Bill, pretend like he was mean you know he was all the time beating up people over there and he'd kill em. Commie Stamper, that was Joe's brother had a warrant for him, warrant or how ever way you say and was after him, he was way ahead of him he couldn't catch up with him, said Marian Stamper come along and said he said I'll give you the warrant said you're on a horse you can overtake him, he went up there and told him he was under arrest and he threwed his coat off and said "I'll just beat you up I'll kill ya", he said "who are ya" and he said I'm Marian Stamper, said he never did open his mouth no more and just give himself up right then. Said "who are you" said "I'm Marian Stamper," said he never did say, Black Bill Stone was suppose to have been so mean, said he just give up and let em put the handcuffs on him right then.

Meade: Marian Stamper was the one that killed those seven men.

Thomas: Yeah

Meade: Was he the sheriff?

Thomas: No he was just in that Underwood war, you know where they feuded backwards and

Meade: Yeah yeah

Thomas: Yeah said Bill Stone is mean he beated and he told em he said, he was in ahead of Joe Stamper's brother Commie, he said he could never caught up, he could out run him, he couldn't overtake him, you know to serve the war, he said your uncle come along on a big yellow horse and he could overtake him and he went and he jerked his coat off and said I'll give you one of the best beatins, he said "my name is Black Bill Stone I guess, said what's your name?" He said "I guess you've heard of Marian Stamper." He just stuck his hands up.

Meade: (laughing)

Thomas: and handcuffed him

Meade: You told me a story where this lady almost knifed you because you were looking at this dog

Thomas: Oh yeah this guy by the name of Clyde Inex has got a petrified dog this guy found up from under the house, and we was up there looking at it and she had a knife out in her hands, she was showing us you know this and that and she said it could have had rabies, this old boy was with me Johnny Hall(?) and he's all the time doing something for a laugh, he jumped and scared her and she drawed that knife on me, like that, you know we was looking at that old dog, anyway and when I jumped back against the building boy I hit the back of my head against the building, she come a hair of getting me with that knife over him jumping at her and scaring her, you know like a dog, old dog was laying her you know like a rock and she's pointing out everything about the dog and he scared her and she drawed the knife on me and I jumped back against the wall. That was the summer before this one, well it was a year ago this summer past when that happened.

Meade: Now what was this dog look like?

Thomas: It just looked like a rock laying there, it was just a dog you know, petrified.

Meade: Like did it have any hair on it?

Thomas: No it didn't have any hair. You could see it's teeth and it looks scary. I was about half scared too it looked funny

Meade: Was it bones

Thomas: Yeah

Meade: Just the bones?

Thomas: It was just like a chalk dog you know petrified

Meade: Chalk dog?

Thomas: yeah just like a rock, has feet you know crossed up like

Meade: (?)

Thomas: He give sixty-five dollars for it, they're talking about taking it to some of these museums or something or nother, they can bring they can get a lot of money for that. But he won't let it go, his son paid for part of it and he, he drinks(?) and he offered him a brand new ford for his part of it and he never would take it, his son won't. Yeah that old dog you know if you look in its teeth, you know big long teeth and he scared the woman, she drew the knife on me and I hit the back of the head against that old plank wall, out at their smoke house out in the back of their house, boy it hurt. That dog had laid down under, it's a real dog you can tell been and a, ears stand up, it's been in fights, one leg you know laying there crossed up

Meade: so was anything chipped off of it or something?

Thomas: Yeah it's got one foot that has its toenails even on it, it one foot was gone and part of its tail was gone. When it died it rotted or whatever you call it I guess, the rest of it petrified.

Meade: Well did it have eyes and all that?

Thomas: Yeah you can see its eyes around there you know it's like stone. Maybe that'd be good, if you was interested in looking at when you come down

Meade: They won't knife me would they? (laughing)

Thomas: No they wouldn't knife ya, that was old goofy boys scared her, what caused her to draw the knife on me

Meade: yeah

Thomas: Great big old butcher knife thing, it had a blade in it that long, boy he jumped at her you know made her made a noise like a dog and boy she drew that on me and I jumped and that knife come past me and I hit the back of my head against the wall, getting away from it.

Leona: Can you remember anything about that old dog laying out there in the barn out there by the house?

Thomas: Yeah that wouldn't petrified it just dried up. It'd been there for about a year, it laid down and died this old dog, in the barn, my brother had it it'd disappeared we never did know it when I was moving some old hay pitchforks and there it was it'd been gone about a year but it never did have any eyes, the bug and ants and stuff had eat its eyes up and it had hair and stuff I got it up with the fork and throwed him way down over the hill. It lay there but it had all its hair and everything for about a year like that

Meade: You've always had dogs right, at home?

Thomas: Yeah I've always had dogs I like dogs

Meade: You were telling me about what it's like to fox to run the dogs, you know to fox chase

Thomas: Yeah It'll be a bunch of us maybe, I've got two fox hounds at home now, young hounds, my brother and my nephew, and Nester Fannan was a fox hunter, the one that played the banjo, most of the musicians down that country was hunters of some kind like a fox hunter. You get you maybe fifteen or twenty hounds I never did like to hunt that many, it's so much racket you can't tell what's, but they've all you know got a different bark, just like fiddle tunes I separate em out and some of em I think has the lonest bark, and then I've seen people fight over em and have big rackets and everything over ones dog being the lead

Meade: Did you just sit there by the fire and listen?

Thomas: Yeah and listen at em and some dogs a good sticken dog will run like twelve hours, I've had em run twelve hours and fifteen good hounds, maybe I'll be gone, that old Maurice Allen, we left one time and never come in for three days, had a fox chance Maurice's hound and he had a fiddle with him, that's when I first met him. His wife was a wondering where he was at and we had some boos, we'd go to the grocery store and get our eats and go right back out there on that ridge and fiddle and drink and listen to fox chasing. Dad was telling me one time about this guy, he was a old guy and they'd all gone fox hunting and this guy had a bunch of sheep and said they all hit a trail, these dogs and said that man said "hear that long keen barking dog going off in the lead" you know if a dog is fast it can out run a, you know everybody tries to get one so faster, and he said "now that's my dog," and some of em said "no that's mine" and said they run a guy's sheep off down by his barn down there off of that mountain and caught it and killed it, an old farmer run out and all the hunters you know when everybody thought they had caught the fox run down there and said "my dog wasn't in it" said that other guy said "you remember you said your dog had the long bark was in the lead," and he had to pay for the sheep

(laughing)

Said "your dog you remember you said it was in the lead in front of the pack" and he had to pay for the sheep they killed

Meade: How do you tell where your dog is, I mean when they're all running?

Thomas: Well you can tell, you know I always liked to take six to eight hounds out something like that and you can tell it makes a prettier chase. You'd just have to be a fox hunter to understand it, like you know they'll make a loose they'll be running real good with all of em barking, a fox will turn that a way real quick head through a thicket or a brier thicket and your dog maybe he'll get there first sometimes or strike a trail and go one and then, you can usually always tell your own dog's bark unless you got one in there that barks like it, and there's where they had all the fights and things over

Meade: But you can just hear from the bark when they change direction?

Thomas: Yeah you know like when you play a fiddle tune, and they'll be another tune it's just like that but dogs. Yeah you can tell what direction they are and everything, sometimes they'll go out of your hearing distance and they'll be gone two or three hour and sometimes never does come back, the same night you'll give up and go in and get tired of waiting for em to come back. Some foxes run all night and as long as two days, something like that and old time, we don't have any good running foxes like we used to, they got to ordering these foxes, little ol yellow foxes from the western countries and different and they don't run like the old time red ones. They had black legs and a black and a black face and a big white tip on their tails, em kind they'd run starting at the night and they'd run as high as the night and two days, they'd been known to do that or two nights and a day that long

Meade: Do the dogs usually catch em?

Thomas: No, they run, sometimes they do they'll run you know and the fox will get stiff, he can't run they'll waste a few minutes, they'll stand and watch a dog, you know if they make a lose, I've seen dogs that'll run so long their tongues will be hanging down like that, and they come to water they'll stop and get em a drink and the fox will be a watching em all the time, he'll get stiff then you know where he'd run so much and he can't run and they'll catch a whole lot of the time and kill him.

Meade: What's this make a "lose?"

Thomas: Yeah they'll be like they get in a thicket or you know like they come to a creek a fox will get in the water and then a fox can't smell em, you know smell their sent from where they've been you know a fox will get in water, you know like a creek

Meade: Yeah

Thomas: You know like a stream of water and they'll trod up that water a long ways and try to loose the dogs, some of em will get so smart they have one of em on each side, and deers does that too and they'll go up that stream till they find him. I sat a fishing down there by Joe Stamper's, where we was at one time and it was hot, and I kept hearing these hounds boy they'd bring something right around these steep points, and it was a hot day

and directly I heard something plug in the water and I seen the water go way up in the air like that and it's a great big edge of water and I seen when it stuck its head up it was a big deer, and I set in back behind some limbs in a shade fishing you know, had my boat tied, there was one of em old row boats, John Boats we'd call em, you'd take a paddle, ore, and deer swam right past me I could just raise up and took a boat paddle down, he got in the middle of that big water and the bottom of it some of it was forty and some of it was eighty-five feet deep in places. That deer swam all the way out though there for about a half a mile, and he didn't come plum out of the water he just got to the shallow water and stood, and em hounds, one of em swum keenly there over that big old deep water he'd go up and down but he never did get fur enough that deer was watching him all the time. He'd go up and down the other side a hunting for that deer, it was straight standing up there watching him, they're smart, that's the way it lost him keeping em from running him.

Meade: yeah

Thomas: yeah I seen that

Meade: Do you do much hunting?

Thomas: Yeah I do a lot of squirrel hunting, fox hunting, rabbit hunting, coon, but I've never killed a deer yet, I'm going, I'd like to hunt some for em

Meade: Don't they have a lot in the country?

Thomas: Yeah I just never did any deer hunting

Meade: With fox hunting

Thomas: That's a

Meade: do you shot em?

Thomas: No you just go out there for the sport

Meade: you just run the fox

Thomas: Now during hunting season we do for it's so many of em, there's just not any quail, much rabbit you know it's a clifty country where the foxes was thick, we have a hunting season on em and kill em out through the winter, I wished it was thinned out more. Their fur's high now, a red fox will bring about twenty or twenty-five dollars

Meade: they've got pretty scarce aren't they the red fox?

Thomas: No, there's plenty of em down home. That's about all that's around.

Meade: I was thinking about the red wolf

Thomas: Yeah

Meade: They don't have any wolves around there do they?

Thomas: No, they turned loose some wolves I heard em talking about, I heard Dr. Webb, you know is, I don't know if I can think of it, he comes with em, about this wildlife outfit, on Tiger over there I heard him say about four year ago they trapped a wolf. It followed water, they thought it come in from Mississippi or some place like that it followed water, they seen him over there around this Tiger, you know that's another creek, just liked a little bit from being one hundred miles long, and they set a trap for him and they caught him a big gray wolf. I heard Dr. Webb tell that on the radio

Meade: Is that where they got that fiddle tune *No Corn on Tiger* (?)

Thomas: Yeah

Meade: Do you know that tune?

Thomas: No but I know an old guy who knows it

Meade: Who's that?

Thomas: Cecil Crank

Meade: Cecil Crank

Thomas: Yeah and he had words to it, he sung it he claimed

Meade: He had words to it

Thomas: Yeah

He claimed, I went there to get some whiskey during one of the Tom T. Hall days, he come to Olive Hill

Meade: Yeah

Thomas: And I'd been going there getting beer and whiskey and I went and there was this guy and his wife said "hey you're a fiddle player," said "we've seen ya" and I said well I don't know if I'm much or not but I pretend to be, I told her, and they come in, he got to playing that fiddle and he said, "here's one I wote myself," he can't talk plain, but I'd a heard Maurice Allan, Sam Cox and all em talk about the tune, and he sung it and I remember about all the water got up and took all the corn away, washed off everything, and his son comes over there every once in a while

Meade: Where does his son live?

Thomas: Over in Carter County, he moved away from that house. He lived towards Ellet(?) there, not too fur, a place called Limestone, then but I don't know where he'd moved too, still over in Carter. But I can get in touch with his son and we can get a hold of him that a way

Meade: Why don't you try to do that before you come, I'd really like to find out the words for that.

Thomas: Ok, yeah he sung it he kept a fiddle a going and sung it as he went.

Meade: I've got a tape of that, well Ed Hailey plays *No Corn on Tiger* on the banjo

Thomas: Yeah he had words to it, this old guy did, Cecil Crank

Meade: Did he play anything else? Was he much of a fiddler?

Thomas: No he wouldn't too much, I remember hearing him play *Coon Dog*, things like that in a contest one time, when I was twelve years old

Meade: Well I'd like to go hear him, I'm just curious to hear the words to that

Thomas: Yeah

Meade: more than anything else. What was the story was it just, that was it, all the story was? There was a big flood on Tiger or something?

Thomas: Yeah and, you know people had out big fields of corn and the water got up so high it just washed everything away, all the corn, there wouldn't any corn left, on Tiger and they put this tune, wrote it somebody, *No Corn on Tiger*. I heard Sam Cox play it on a banjo on time, but I can't remember you know how it was

Meade: Who's Sam Cox?

Thomas: He's a barber lives in Portsmouth, he's been in Smithsonian once, when Ohio come

Meade: Oh, yeah he played with

Thomas: He's originally from Concord

Meade: he played with Eugene

Thomas: Yeah he's originally from Concord, Kentucky down below Vanceburg

Meade: What kind of banjo does he play?

Thomas: Well he'll have one one time when you see and maybe the next time he'll have another one

Meade: I mean what did he play scruggs or overhand

Thomas: No he plays, I kindly call it modern like style back old days stuff, like *Nola* and stuff you know *Floppy Eared Mule*, he don't play Scruggs or Reno(?) non of that kind of playing

Meade: Did he play some three fingers?

Thomas: Yeah, but it's all together different. Maybe we could go hear him when he comes then, and he played *Sailor's Hornpipe* in B flat on the banjo

Meade: In B flat?

Thomas: Yeah. And then he played tunes like *Nola*, well you've heard *Nola* probably

Meade: Yeah those are old

Thomas: And then he plays old fiddle tunes too

Meade: On a banjo?

Thomas: Yeah. He's a barber he lives on the west side of Portsmouth, Ohio

Meade: I'd like to hear that, by three finger style you know

Thomas: Yeah.

Meade: playing a fiddle tune

Thomas: I run into Willy Gray up from Springfield, Ohio, he was seventy some then and that's been around ten year ago maybe, eight or ten, I went out there to this Marlene Berry, that was her great uncle, and he played a three finger, she was talking about him said, "Earl Scruggs said I played a three finger before Earl Scruggs was ever born." It didn't sound like it, he played *Floppy Eared Mule* and all kinds of things like that, I did have some tapes of him I don't know what ever did happen to em, he played a tune on the fiddle

Meade: Well you know the first banjo player who ever, well not the first but around 1900 there used to, they didn't have like tenor banjo

Thomas: Yeah

Meade: the guy who used to play the banjo, in Vaudeville used to play five string banjo three finger style and he played things like *Nola* and that's probably where this guy got those things from

Thomas: Yeah

Meade: like there was guy named Fred(?)

Thomas: Yeah

Meade: Doyle Lawson and these guys and they were all big stars you know

Thomas: Yeah

Meade: but all that stuff is forgotten

Thomas: Yeah I heard him talking about, he'll use a straight pick at times he'll play a lick and then do his own set and a lick goes down some way and then does his own second

Meade: his own second?

Thomas: yeah, yeah I heard him doing it but I didn't understand it, I never really paid any attention back then, which you know I should you know when any body's younger they don't pay any attention, wouldn't real interested in it (laugh)

Meade: Yeah, you talk about the style of his picking

Thomas: He took straight pick some way and then he'd hit a lick and then another lick come in and he claimed it sound like another banjo setting there

Meade: Oh, I see what you mean, yeah

Thomas: Done his own second playing claimed

Meade: Gus has got a friend that plays, Speedy Tolliver

Thomas: Yeah I met Speedy. Yeah now he plays a all together different style than Cox do

Meade: Do you know he is four finger he wears a finger pick, up picking and down picking

Thomas: yeah, we were out there

Meade: the only person I ever saw do that

Thomas: Somebody asked him how did he do it and his son said “well that’s a secret about him,” they wouldn’t tell. I thought he done some good banjo playing. I liked it.

Meade: yeah

Thomas: It was old timey

Meade: Most people prefer bluegrass now?

Thomas: Yeah down through that country they do but, Charlie Daily, the old jeweler you know there Sherman Morgan like people like Perry and Joe Stamper, they like old fiddle tunes and

Meade: Yeah

Thomas: At one time down there at home there wouldn’t any country music, bluegrass nor nothing it was all rock you know moved in and took over, that’s almost everybody, but now young peoples like old time fiddle playing things come back, I got nephews now real small and a lot of other boys and girls liking it. They’ve been hearing more of it, see used to they didn’t play non no bluegrass nor nothing on the radio, down in there

Meade: How come you got started really, you know back when you were about twenty-nine

Thomas: Well I got up you know around Maurice Allen and then the fiddle sounds so pretty, some old tunes like *Snake Winder*, you know a lot of em I just had to get into it and go to learning

Meade: You were playing fiddle a little bit? 54:32

Thomas: Yeah, never

Meade: all along weren’t ya

Thomas: Yeah, you know off and on and a, didn’t care whether I played a tune, cause I went as high as a year at a time and didn’t play a tune on a fiddle back then. When I worked in the factories I’d never play, not a tune.

Meade: Where’d you work in factories?

Thomas: One, I’ve worked in Mansfield, in fifty-five in a factory there, and then I’ve worked in Springfield, Ohio and Bursars, Ohio, and I’ve worked on a lot of nurseries, I’ve never would pass any physicals from any doctor and I’d just have to, the way I usually get my jobs you know was to get with somebody, personnel manager. The last

job I got you know, on public works, I was up in Bursars, Ohio and this banjo player from Tennessee, his first cousin was a personnel manager at Swan's Rubber Company there in Bursars, he came over there and, we played some and he said "how long how long you gonna be around Shorty?" he called me, I said I'm going to leave out in the morning and he said "why you leaving" said "we'd like to have you around to play with, Lloyd Agle," said "we'd like to have you play with Lloyd, and I said well I don't have any job and I'll be broke in a few days and I've got to get back and he said, " would you stay if you had a job in a factory?" and I said yeah and he said, and I told him and he said, "well we'll fix that" and he took me out to the office on Sunday night and fix all those papers up, and you're suppose to take a physical, and I went on a job, it was labor, I knowed I had done a lot, and he took me through there and showed me, I knowed I had done a lot harder work than that. I went on labor making three something an hour, pretty close to it, and I wasn't there over a month, or something like that, they was having a strike and I was going to get bumped off, and you know they was bumping, you know people been there ten, fifteen year, and out of the you know hose pool, where they make those rubber hose you know, gardening hose and all that

Meade: yeah

Thomas: And a they was coming, I knowed I was going and two or three of the bosses they liked me awful well and they all got together and there was a janitor's job coming up and you can't bump on that, unless there'd be another janitor. They come and I was getting ready to leave and they said, "would you work on a janitor job?" and I said yeah anything to make a living, and I stayed nine months on that, before my mother, you know got sick again, and I quit and got home and stayed with her. I'd make anywhere from ninety and when I worked over time a hundred dollars, a hundred and ten a week like that

Meade: Yeah. It's hard, you can't find work in Kentucky though

Thomas: No you got to, now you have to have a good education you know and things to, you know like tobacco work, work on farms and stuff like that, of course their ain't a lot of people want to do that no more, you know young boys want to you know graduate out of high school and things, they go to weigh in and get jobs, and work at shoe factories, sewing factories, things like that.

Meade: Are people being laid off now?

Thomas: Yeah I've heard of people starting to be laid off, it'll be an awful lot of people coming back to Kentucky from, you know left out.

Meade: They got unions there?

Thomas: Yeah they've got unions in Kentucky. They even had em at the clay mines, where you know they quit work and shoveling with an the old mining shovel, they had unions where my dad had died and got em started, back when he was a working

Meade: Do they have big fights over there?

Thomas: Yeah they had trouble. There at Swan's Rubber Company when I worked they stood picket line, it was people beat up all the time, knocked in the head with clubs, and I wouldn't go out there, I was suppose to they told me to come out there and stand on the picket line but I wouldn't go, just somebody beat up and took to the hospital all the time. They had a bunch they called the outlaws, you know it was a bunch of outlaws, rode cycles and had chains on their hands and everything, they'd always stand picket lines anytime a union but they don't stand, what tickled me, it was the coldest time ever and you'd see em out there in their in their shirt sleeves, and their shirts open like that, there stood all up big row of cops boy straighter than a stick and they had those big shields you know to keep the wind you know from hitting em in the face, big black jackets and em guns, and em outlaws would walk right up to em to a big club on their shoulder and jab it towards em, they didn't have no shirts some of em in short sleeved shirts, had em tore off and then unbuttoned and big beards down to there, hair plum down their back. I thought I'd die that near tickled well, they'd walk

Meade: You saw that? You saw that?

Thomas: Yeah I saw that

Meade: Wow

Thomas: They'd walk up to these young cops, they'd it'd be a row of em from back to the woods and they'd take those big clubs and job at em like that. They murdered a lot of people around Bursars, Ohio and blowed up a lot of taverns with dynamite, those outlaws did. But they've got ret of em some way now. It's some stuff they've done I can't tell here, I'll tell you'ns later, but I wouldn't tell on tape what they done to a girl one time, in this bar

Meade: What did they do?

Thomas: I couldn't tell it on this

Meade: Oh ok

Thomas: And all kinds of different stuff you know like that

Meade: People around there talking now about the economic situation? You know food prices and all that?

Thomas: yeah, that's all you hear down through there now. Talking about you know what a hard times it's going to be, they say it'll be. I was talking to man, is eighty-four years old. He said he's been in this gas rations before, he told me I asked him, you're opinion do you think it'll be a hard, he said "Buddy I'm going to tell ya we're going to be a looking at one of the hardest times in the face," said "it's going to be worse than

Hoover's times the way I got it figured it. He's been High Sheriff he's been everything nearly, held a job in Baltimore, Maryland and he's been around Washington DC a lot, he told me. He said it's really going to be a hard time looking us in the face, he said. He's got all kinds of money this old man, they're writing a book on him and I met him talked to him about there about two or three hours. He wanted me to come, you know and put a lot of write ups about me in it. He said when I come back, you know he was telling me to come here and said he'd get the photographer from Ashland to come, wanted me to bring my fiddle, bring my sister said "I want some write ups about you in it. I want some names of old fiddle tunes and things I liked when I was a youngster growing up" said "and I want Buddy Thomas furnishing the tunes for it."

Meade: That's nice.

Thomas: I told him I never did have any education, you can tell he was a well educated, and my nephews and all of them we come in there, we went there to haul some paper wood, we called it, you know where you, where they grind it up and make this paper?

Meade: Yeah

Thomas: And I got's a cold, I never, it turned cold and they had these coats and I was just in, I was freezing and I was a couldn't do nothing, he said, "you better come over to the fire and go over there and get thawed up while they're loading" and you know they're young and stout, boy they never did get cold, and he got to telling me, you know about all this. And I told him I never had any education and he was talking to me, and they come in to warm and he said, he told em, I didn't know he told it, and I went outside for a something nother and he said "that little guy," says "hasn't got any education," be said "he's smarter than an average people" said claimed "there's smart people through this country I've talked to." That made me feel good cause you know I never had any education and things, said "he's got more common sense than half the people through Carter County years ago." I don't know how come him to think that, I'm awful backward you know talking to anybody and no education

Thomas: real good cause I never did have any education and things, said "he's got more common sense than half the people through Carter County here years ago." I don't how come him to think that, I'm awful backward you know talking to anybody and you know no education. I can't place my words right or anything

Meade: Does that bother you?

Thomas: Yeah it does, you know like now it's so many words you know around people who's got a good education and I don't understand what they mean. Like when I was here at the Smithsonian these TV people come around and a, I won't lie about it it was one guy he was wanting to have me, let's see I forgot what channel it was, I couldn't answer all them big questions and I seen him cover my head (laughing). He had to keep me(?) from you know answer all them questions

Meade: Like what did he ask you I mean

(silence)

Thomas: Was talking about my grandfather's fiddle playing, at a hoedown they was you know peppy and you could dance to em good. She said a lot of people we hear them playing didn't put any live into em or it didn't seem like they did, they'd play em too slow, and she said a lot of tunes you know they'd play really too fast, different people. She liked to hear all the bowing put in em too.

Meade: Would she tell you how to do if you were doing it wrong ?

Thomas: Yeah she'll tell me if I wouldn't getting it right or something she'd whistle and say "that ain't the way it goes" and she'd whistle it. Now I've learned more you know in the last couple of year remembering the way she'd whistle, she can't whistle anymore, much and a you know I never forget anything when I hear it back you know like that hardly, as a child like that

Meade: I was going to ask you about that, what was that story you told me the day about that guy, poured water on the guy? I forgot who that was.

Thomas: That was Joe Stamper and Sam Cox and they was doing a show in Columbus, Ohio, that was way back maybe before I was born, Joe was telling me about it and Sam had told me about it. They got drunk and this other guy was getting a bigger hand than they was, banjo player, Joe lost his picks in a spit tune and hunt em out in front of everybody and put em on and I think they run him off the stage, or something like that and this other banjo player come out, sitting on the stage a playing and Sam Cox got him a big bucket of water, I imagine it held around two gallon, son he climbed up above the curtains, where he could look over on this banjo player and Joe held the bucket up and throwed of water on him and then run away

Meade: (laughing) Well what they threw these picks in the spittoon?

Thomas: Yeah, Joe was drunk, he was a spitteler and he told Sam, he was a banjo player too back then, and Joe said it's, or maybe I'm, all I know is that Sam told Joe he got too drunk to fiddle, said "let me fiddle some Sam" and Joe said "ok I'll play the banjo." And he got the pick and jumped plum around and lost them in the spittoon and they had that chewing tobacco both of them and he got in that spittoon to get his picks out and he said people got to hollering, they had to boeing em and they run them off

Meade: (laughing)

Thomas: the stage, and this other one come on and was getting a bigger hand then they were getting and Sam threw a big bucket of water on him, (laughing) and then they run away and come down to Kentucky

Meade: (laughing) There were some other stories you told me about what old Joe did? I forgot what

Thomas: If I can think of it. I've told so many (laughing). Can you remember any

Meade: Well I remember just think of them. What was that story you told me, but I want to get it straight that, the story about the fiddling contest for the girl

Thomas: Yeah, do you want me to mention any names, that wouldn't hurt her I wouldn't imagine

Meade: Oh, no, no, you don't, you change that

Thomas: This guy told me this girl lived down and around Trinity, Kentucky, or Concord, Kentucky, one I don't remember her name, said she really liked to fiddle, so well she had a fiddler's contest for single guys, whoever played the fiddle the best, some certain tune I believe or just played as the best fiddler, they got to marry her if they wanted to. They said this older guy was Dicks Swinington was the best fiddler, and she picked him and married him. And when he past away she'd want to hear him fiddle and she'd go back, she missed him, and she'd go back and say "Dick are you in there?" and said "if you are saw three times across your fiddle," and these guys got hear her going in there a saying that and they'd climb up in the attic of that old house, they knowed about what time of day she'd go everyday to see if he'd ever come back, and said if you're up in there saw so many times and they did and the next she said, "is that you Dick?," and they didn't say anything and said "saw on your fiddle if that's you" and they sawed on it, and she run away and never did come back to the house no more. That's what I was told. Scared her out I guess after going back you know and hunting for him

Meade: Who told you that story?

Thomas: Herman Mackey(?) and his sons I heard them telling it you know, the older ones had told them about it

Meade: When did that all take place?

Thomas: No telling how long ago it's been

Meade: (laughing) Do you remember any other stories like that, I mean about old time fiddlers like that?

Thomas: Yeah if I can remember em. What about that one, Jim Hook, his son. Jim Hook was an awful good fiddle player, he told this one on his son, said Omer Hook, they had to paddle across the Ohio River, it'd take em half a day to get across you know on one of them john boats, with a oar paddle, and they had a square dance playing over in the southern part of Ohio, was around Ripley there, somewheres in there, and a it took em a half a day to get over there and said when they got over there Omer Hook he turned

around and started oaring back across, they said “where are you going Omer?” Said “I’m going back home,” said “What are you going to do?” said “I’m going to go back home and work on my bee gum and my polecat dens.” Said he’s a peculiar kind of a boy if he fools with honey bees and polecats.

Meade: (laughing)

Thomas: (laughing) And he left daddy on Ohio side, ain’t no way to get back and he went back and worked on his bee gums and polecat dens

Meade: What’s a bee gum?

Thomas: That’s where they put these bees in, you know to make their honey

Meade: Oh

Thomas: They stay in there, you know make honey in there, that’s where they stay there all the time. It’s like you know somebody being in their home. That’s where, big wood gums, they’d make it out of plant(?) and they’d make honey inside of it

Meade: huh, I’ve never heard of that. Actually I’ve kinda heard a story like that, but I don’t know if it’s true about Ed Hailey, he got old where he didn’t want to fiddle much anymore and he got more and more cranky, you know about

Thomas: Yeah

Meade: guys wanting him to play because he felt he retired you know but, some people came over and wanted to take him to a dance so his son said “ok sure, come on pop let’s go, why don’t you go and fiddle, you’ll enjoy it.” So they drove him over toward Ironton and they got in the car and left him off you know and they come on back home and in about two minutes later (laughing) Ed Haley walked back in, they don’t know how he got back home, but he walked back in, and there he was, by the time they got back.

Thomas: Yeah. It was a guy, I never did hear him play, in Greenup, he’d grown up about Shultz, up in there some place, Maurice Allen told me he’d be a walking the road, his name was Fiddlin George Coal, he’d have his keys fastened on his belt, be a walking the roads a playing his fiddle

Meade: Was he was a blind guy?

Thomas: No, he wasn’t blind, they said he walked the road kindly crazy though (laugh)

Meade: What kind of guy do you think fiddlers are?

Thomas: Well some of em was awful good people and some of ems smart elics and I’ve run into some that would steal the hat off of your head or anything like that. I’ve run into

a lot of good hearted fiddlers and some smart elics and some of them thieves. Steal you fiddles or anything.

Meade: Yeah. Well lets go back, maybe we should just go and think of things. What was Jimmy Wheeler like? I don't know what kind of guy he is?

Thomas: He's a real fun turned guy, he's a real jokin, he'll play for ya anytime you want him to or he always did me or anything like that, anyway to help ya learn your turn or anything

Meade: Now let me see, now *Turny Bobber*(?) does that have any words to it?

Thomas: Not as I ever heard anybody playin any of it

Meade: Have you ever heard it any place besides your mother?

Thomas: nuh-huh. Yeah I head Perry Riley play it. You know he was, my grandfather his uncle, you know by marriage and then they was a distant cousin anyway, you know, but his aunt was Jimmy Richmond's wife, Arty Riley

Meade: yeah

Thomas: Yeah and I've heard a man by the name of Thurston Stamper play it, he learned it from Jimmy Richmond, he said. He's in his seventies by now

Meade: Yeah he's still around there, he played on an album with us. Is he much of a, how's he doing? Have you heard anything?

Thomas: No I haven't seen or heard anything about him for a while. I always liked him he was a real good guy, always helped me anyways he could or anything like that

Meade: Was he much of a fiddler?

Thomas: Well, he played a lot of good notes, but he played by himself all the time he never, had any time

Meade: Yeah

Thomas: sort of like a Sanford Kelly. He put pretty notes in them and everything, could bow out, but he never had any time with it, when I head him

Meade: Yeah, let me go back. He plays banjo to doesn't he?

Thomas: Yeah, old time banjo playin, dulcimer.

Meade: He plays dulcimer?

Thomas: Yeah

Meade: Even back when you were a kid he played a dulcimer?

Thomas: Yeah, not much, he played it back you know when he was younger

Meade: Let me, well you never seen a dulcimer before you went to these folk festivals did ya?

Thomas: Well

Meade: Your mother talked about em.

Thomas: Yeah I saw, I got one, it's made out of orange crates, this old guy lived just over across Lewis County line, he made it, by the name of Tight Pennilem(?), he could make fiddles or anything, he moved to Florida and made that up there and I'd say that was during fifty-five or six or something like that

Meade: he had made on then?

Thomas: Yeah and he bought that up and I had a little oh fiddle that wouldn't that much good and he traded it and I wanted that dulcimer and I played it in fifteen minutes as good as he could and I never did like it no more

Meade: Because it's wheezy?

Thomas: yeah I guess. I just didn't like it after I traded him for it and I told him I said I'd give my fiddle away (laughing) and I was never satisfied with it after, I thought I'd be real hard and it was in fifteen minutes I was playing it as good as that guy was

Meade: (laughing)

Thomas: I never did play them anymore after that

Meade: Yeah it's kind of funny, I mean the dulcimer nobody was playing the dulcimer much

Thomas: No I heard him playing it the one time, just him and I learned it right then, watched him while he was a doing it

Meade: In fifty-six you said?

Thomas: Yeah, or seven best I can remember

Meade: How old were you then, about eighteen?

Thomas: No, I was in my twenties. I'd have to count em.

Meade: Yeah

Thomas: About twenty-one or two, maybe three, something like that.

Meade: You weren't listening to country music much, so you didn't hear that

Thomas: Oh all I hear just on the Grand ol' Opry during that time, you know like Carl Smith singing and I heard Bill Monroe a lot during that time

Meade: so you'd gotten a radio by that time

Thomas: yeah we'd had an old battery radio, but like I said before, you know when the music was going on I'd be in the bed asleep when I was real small you know eight, nine and ten years old like that

Meade: They say that nine miles out of Louisville you don't know and got mixed up with Maurice Allen?

Thomas: He's all a man they better hear him play that tune

Meade: Do you have any funny of stories on him or, you must since he's a character?

Thomas: I know some but I shouldn't put them on

Meade: Well just tell me, I'm not you know

Thomas: He was a guy by the name of Luke Bentley, they was fox hunters, I used to fox hunt with both of them, this Alice Maynard told me they come down to his house, Maurice had his fiddle and they'd come up to his place and they had a big fox hound sitting in the back seat and Maurice and Luke Bentley both was drunk and that dog had used the restroom in the back seat and had it all over the fiddle (laughing) and Maurs had up under his chin a playing it, he was drunk and (laugh) he had it all over him

Meade: (laughing) Was he always been kinda

Thomas: yeah

Meade: funny, even before he got so old?

Thomas: I don't know that's since I knowed him, I wouldn't know what he was like back you know before I met him. He'd done retired from a steel mill when I met him. I think that I'm pretty sure he had.

Meade: Ok. And he used to be friends with Kiesinger and all them?

Thomas: yes

Meade: and Mason Neil?

Thomas: yeah and Mason Neil I've heard him talk about Ed Hailey, he'd been you know around him

Meade: He seemed like he'd know Clark better than Ed Hailey

Thomas: yeah Clark and John Kebler's his, and he got to like Mason Neil I've heard him say, he though Acey Neil was a little better then Clark there at the last of it

Meade: What was Acey Neil(?) like? He was kinda honery, not honery but stingy.

Thomas: Yeah about his fiddling he was

In the back of my head and then it stayed there and I went and then I went and was telling Maurice Allen about it and he said, "I can play that," and then old Maurs showed me the rest of it

Meade: I bet Acey didn't like it when you could play.

Thomas: nuh-huh and I went back you know I'd learned it and Maurs or them took me to let Acey hear it, and Ace he listened at it and he wouldn't never play any hardly more in front of me where I could learn anything. He said he didn't feel like it or something like that when I'd go around

Meade: What kind of tunes did he play, like maybe you didn't remember?

Thomas: Well he played some, one I know, Charleston

Meade: Well didn't you play Charleston number one?

Thomas: No, it was different, I think it went in G cord. He had a lot, I can't remember all lot of them right now but he had a lot of tunes I didn't play

Meade: more like what?

Thomas: I tried to study some, I remember he played a lot of tunes, he played a lot of waltzes too

Meade: Well they were Charlestons

Thomas: Yeah

Meade: But it wasn't how you know Charlestons

Thomas: One two and one both

Meade: yeah. It wasn't either one of them?

Thomas: nuh-huh

Meade: Do you think Maurice Allen might know it?

Thomas: Yeah he might

Meade: What's some of the tunes that Maurice Allen used to play that you didn't get, that you didn't learn?

Thomas: Well he played, let's see about the only ones that remember real well are the ones I learned from him, I have heard him play other tunes I don't know, used to, but I can't think of you now their named right off of my head. I'll need to study some. Right off the hand I can't remember

Meade: yeah

Thomas: any of them

Meade: Now Ace he would go around and he would play fiddle, he would play show and things wouldn't he?

Thomas: Yeah

Meade: Did you play with him ever I mean guitar or something?

Thomas: I played one time at Maurs Allen's house just a little bit with him, he come there the first time I met him I played guitar with him, a little bit the one time

Meade: Now Maurs Allen he'd always get all the fiddlers together right?

Thomas: Yeah he'd like to get them all to come to his house a lot of em

Meade: Now Frailly(?) he never was in that bunch was he?

Thomas: No, he was never

Meade: Did you ever see much of Frailly?

Thomas: No I never did, not very much at all. Yeah I've seen him more in the last two years more than I ever did, you know really become acquainted with him

Meade: But Jr. Wheeler and all these guys are friends right?

Thomas: Yeah they're friends, ol Maurs he's a friend to, we was talking about Acey Neil one time, me and my sister was playing a square dance and it was another fiddle by the name of Arnold Sharp, from Oak Hill, Ohio, he was there and we was a having trouble, he thought we was, you know with the amplifier and things and I heard of Acey to do this, and this other fiddler he was drunk, he was down on his hands and knees crawling around looking at the wire, and Acey was sitting over there, he'd unplugged it (laugh).

Meade: (laugh)

Thomas: And then they said he could play the fiddle, Acey could and cross his feet backwards and forwards, you know his legs, out of time to throw other people off. He'd do it you know to throw guitar player and then he'd cross his feet backwards and forwards like that to mess them up

Meade: That was playing with him? Why would you want to mess somebody up that's playing with you?

Thomas: I don't know that's what me and this guy from Portsmouth talked and said Acey Neil will do stuff like that

Meade: Was Ace nice when he wasn't fiddling?

Thomas: yeah when he never had his fiddle or he wouldn't around fiddlin he'd talk, he was pretty nice that way but he did throw a lot of slurs and stuff at me

Meade: (?)

Thomas: no not too much

Meade: Wasn't much fun to be around him

Thomas: No I, when I seen what he'd don't I never did, I usually went to Jimmy Wheeler's or Maurs Allen's about half them tunes I learned from them two.

Meade: From watching those guys?

Thomas: Yeah but Jimmy learned a lot of them from Acey, you know a growing up, I learnt some from him

Meade: Was Jimmy younger than Ace?

Thomas: Oh yeah, I'd say Jimmy might be in his sixties, back then Ace was sixty-five I mean sixty-two when I first met him. I was talking to him, he said he learnt all of his life and still learning then

Meade: Acey?

Thomas: Yeah

Meade: Now Kiesinger never came back into that country again?

Thomas: No I never seen Kies, I never even heard any talk of him till I got up to ol man Allen's and Acey Neil, Jim Wheeler had never seen him or heard of him

Meade: So how did Allen meet him?

Thomas: He did fiddler's contests back there in Portsmouth and then Kiesinger used to come to his house and stay, he said for a week and two weeks at a time

Meade: Back in the thirties?

Thomas: yeah, see he was a bachelor Maurs was, see that was before he got married and had a good job you know from the steel mill retired from it and he said Kiesinger would come around and stay and Monny Rivers, come from Cincinnati up and come and visit Maurs. He got killed in a car wreck he was an awful good fiddler I hear

Meade: Who is this Arnold Sharp? J.P. was talking about him.

Thomas: Yeah he was about a, he was a good fiddler and he was about one of the nicest guys ever a feller could meet back then, I hear he was in a car wreck or some kind of accident

Meade: So he's still alive isn't he?

Thomas: yeah, he lives in Oak Hill, Ohio a lot up there some place

Meade: Did you ever pick up any tunes from him?

Thomas: No about all we played we both played the same tunes. He asked me where I got my version of Pine Creek from one time and he played it and I said from Maurs Allen and Jimmy Wheeler and them

Meade: Now what did he call Pine Creek?

Thomas: He called it Pine Creek. All fiddlers all other ones around there, you know around Portsmouth and all across the river and all up and down there called it Pine Creek

Meade: How about going back to Kentucky now, did they all play that one?

Thomas: No, all I ever did hear play that was Jimmy Wheeler and Maurs Allen

Meade: What are the ones that those Ohio guys play, the common tunes I mean, but that you don't hear everywhere I mean like Cumberland Gap or something

Thomas: I just play stuff like Fisher's Hornpipe, Devil's Dream, you know stuff like that

Meade: I know

Thomas: Blackberry Blossom

Meade: Do they play that a lot

Thomas: Yeah it was one of Acey's favorite tunes I think

Meade: How about Portsmouth Air(?), did you get pretty well known?

Thomas: I don't know I never did hear of anybody, Jimmy Wheeler, Maurs Allen's the only two guys I ever hear play that

Meade: How about Pumpkin Vine?

Thomas: Well I learnt, the first time I ever heard of it Joe Stamper played it and he couldn't remember it all, I was playing some of it when Jimmy Wheeler come to visit me that time, heard about me, come with Sam Cox, you know Sam Cox and Joe was great buddies back then, the one that throwed the water on the banjo player

Meade: Yeah

Thomas: And Sam had been out there and he heard me, he went back and told Jim he said, "it's a young fiddler out there growing up" and said "and he know parts of some old tunes," said "we ought to go out there and kindly help him out" and Jim come up and made me a tape. He put that on and I went out there Maurs Allen had a lot of pretty stuff in it too and I learned a lot from him and Joe. I learnt some from Joe and then Jim Wheeler and then Maurs Allen on that tune. And they said, I played Grey Eagle, and you know got in third position, they said Jim Wheeler, I mean Sam Cox was a kiddin Jim Wheeler and all of them a coming back and said "you notice what little fingers he had shorts getting plum up like that?" said "in about ten more years he'd make you all sit up and pay attention to him." Jim Wheeler said Sam made them remarks coming back said everybody will be listening to Buddy Thomas in ten more years (laughing)

Meade: Do you think you've had more trouble learning the fiddle because of your fingers being short?

Thomas: Yeah I'd say so. If I didn't have a real wide hand in there I wouldn't be able to reach any notes, see how wide my hand is in the middle?

Meade: Yeah

Thomas: I wouldn't be able to reach any notes at all, it's hard for me to use my little finger there, I use it a lot but, most all the time, but it's hard it's short

Meade: Yeah, you have to slip up to things where people would

Thomas: Yeah

Meade: reach

Thomas: I can play it out some of them but I have to do slide, I like them ol slide notes and ol timey notes

Meade: Yeah

Thomas: I think that's what makes it sound old timey them slides

Meade: Oh yeah I yeah. I really like that it's just you don't look like you're made to be a fiddle player, with little hands you know

Thomas: (laughing)

Meade: but you know people will surprise ya

Thomas: J.P. Frailly said I had the shortest fingers just about then any one fiddler he'd seen near

Meade: Yeah

Thomas: when we go around the crowd most of the time he'll get my hand and show it to them and say look there at what he's got to play with

Meade: Well let's see you never did tell me these words, does this Turkey in the Pig Pen(?) have words?

Thomas: Not as I know of it, I learnt that one from Maurs Allen too

Meade: How about this Feed my Poor Horse some Hay(?)

Thomas: I leant that one Perry

Meade: Yeah

Thomas: That's before, I didn't learn it before this last Thanksgiving past, Thanksgiving Day, you know when we was at Perry's house when you last come down.

Meade: Yeah, you played it for me

Thomas: Yeah I remember that and then he tapes over at my sister's. I got my fiddle that day it'd been a month and nine days, and when I'd lay down of a night in bed that tune would come to me. You know I'd be a laying there and I'd play it on the way back home when I went and got my fiddle. So there was Red Haired Boy, heard them guys play it and I hadn't had a fiddle in a long time, I'd say well a couple of weeks something like that they'd been playing maybe three, we had to go West Liberty the Sorghum Festival, fourteenth of October, this last fall past and I learnt Red Haired Boy on the way up there.

Meade: That's pretty good to remember that a tune like that. Now Kitty Puss (?) you had words to that one, what were

Thomas: Hop up kitty puss, hop up higher. Hop up kitty puss your tails in a fire.

Meade: (laugh)

Thomas: I guess it meant around, you know them old fireplaces, the cats used to lay around them and I guess that one got his tail in the fire or something. They have been caught on fire like that. (laughing)

Meade: What do you think about that tune anyway?

Thomas: I think that's got the most quickest changes in it of any one tune I ever heard near. Out of all the fiddle tunes I've, you know played.

Meade: You've never heard anyone but your mother
(silence)

Thomas: later Perry you know played it some, you know I got to hear him, but back then I never did hear Perry play that. And a guy sung a verse to it it was a banjo player, he was friend of Jimmy Richmond, my grandfather, he had grown up with my mother and them he was a banjo player, by the name of Hilbert Davis, one election day he was drunk and he was singing that Kitty Puss on Election Day and I remember that much of the words, he's dead now.

Meade: Now on the banjo did it sound just as strange as it does on the fiddle?

Thomas: While I've never heard anybody play it on the banjo

Meade: He just sang it

Thomas: yeah he was just singing it, I never did get to hear it hear him, he quite you know during that time

Meade: Did you're mother say, did she ever talk about it I mean?

Thomas: No she'd just whistle it

Meade: I mean she played it on the organ, she wouldn't have any trouble playing it on the organ would she?

Thomas: I don't remember rather I ever did hear her play that one on the organ. I would say she probably could for she'd play Wild Horse and stuff like that that'd be hard to play on the organ

Meade: She'd play the melody on the organ?

Thomas: Yeah. She could play anything just about it. They clamed she was as good as any in that country, you know for a woman. Well she beat all them men around our area playing the organ.

Meade: Did she ever play in a string band with the organ ?

Thomas: No

Meade: Did they have string bands? They had banjos and fiddles and they played together

Thomas: Yeah. She played some you know back when she was a real young girl, you know after she was married, she married when she was seventeen, she never did play anymore hardly except the organ, my father bought her the organ and she played by herself. See going walking you couldn't hardly carry an organ backwards and forwards

Meade: Yeah

Thomas: five or six miles from the house (laughing)

Meade: No (laughing)

Thomas: (laughing) it'd be kindly hard to do

Meade: Yeah

Man: the tape ends at this point and what Gus is asking about is shorts sedition, which at the beginning of the next tape Buddy proceeds to tell about beginning with the eight or ten houses out from Vanceburg

Thomas: yeah I've heard the Osmond Brothers, you know in later years

Meade: yeah but not when you were a kid

Thomas: No

Meade: What songs did your mother sing besides hymns I was asking you about that, do you remember? Like ballades and stuff?

Thomas: Well I can't remember she song a lot of songs, but I remember.

Meade: Remember any other ones?

Thomas: No. Yeah, she used to sing more Stelly Kenny, but I asked her a while back she can't remember any of it, my uncle used to sing it too and he sung something about a, I remember hearing him sing, something about a sparrow, was a pretty song and a Rowan County Troubles and different old songs like that

Meade: What do you know about that *Rowan County Troubles*?

Thomas: Me?

Meade: Yeah

Thomas: I don't know anything about it myself

Meade: It was some king of feud wasn't it?

Thomas: yeah, but I never did find out what it was over. That Underwood and Stamper feud was over horse stealing, you know I was telling you about that didn't I?

Meade: yeah what was the story again?

Thomas: Joe told me said it was some guys, I don't remember the names, stealed horses over there by Loging(?), Kentucky, that's over there in Carter over in that country and bringing them into Lewis County and selling them to these guys and they'd go back and go back and tell them these Stampers stole them and then they got to feuding over it and got to hiding in the woods a shooting one another. Marian Stamper killed seven men, you know a doing the feuding, and Joe said his daddy had that big ol field corn down there in the bottom in front of their house, I used to stay there some with Joe, they said they didn't know which one of the Stampers he was, but never would be into the feuding, said he had to plow his corn out and they stayed in the woods there night and day watching for them to him, and he said he'd plow about half way through the field and turn around and go back, you know how they reach for their rifles, they was plumb on top of them hills there, said he plowed out too fur one time and they shot his plow handle off

and he unhooked his horse and went and put it in the barn, come back the next day and finished the job

Meade: What happened in the feud though?

Thomas: Well

Meade: What happened to them? How did it finish?

Thomas: Joe Stamper's daddy said, Joe was telling me, I think his name was Taylor Stamper, he went with a white flag and put it up and they told the Underwoods to hold their fire, said Taylor Stamper was never in there, said he was a truthful man and he got a hold of that guy who was still selling them horses

Meade: Yeah

Thomas: and stealing them some way and that's what you know settled it then. Marian Stamper had a mean name you know. He left my dad's uncle by marriage, Meniffee Logan, had that old rifle he killed all them men with, Meniffee Logan said when Marian Stamper come there he'd never get off of his horse till he seen that gun

Meade: Something about blood on it?

Thomas: Yeah he said certain times a year and things there'd look like blood would you know come on the stalk of that gun when it rained and stuff like that. Commy Stamper, that was Joe's brother, he was a, they'd advertised him, had a warrant for a guy who was real mean, a man by the name of Black Bill Stone, he was all the time a beating up people and shooting and stuff and Commy Stamper was after him you know with a warrant to serve it on him, and he couldn't keep up with him. He'd run off when he seen him coming, he was away about a half mile a head of him and Marian Stamper come along, he was riding a little yellow horse and Commy gave him a warrant, you know to advertise him and said you're on a horse and maybe you can overtake him. He took it and he went up and he said Black Bill Stone threwed his coat off and he said "I'm going to give you a beating of your life," and he said, at first he said "you don't know who you're a foolin with I'm Black Bill Stone," and said, "who are you?" and he said I'm Marian Stamper and said when he said that he throwed up his hands and let him put the hand cuffs on him.

Meade: (laugh)

Thomas: when he said I'm Marian Stamper

Meade: Yeah

Thomas: He heard about him killing all them guys, and Marian told him, he said you better watch one more, I waiting for that guy to make me eight.” They said he threwed his hands up and gave up right then

Meade: But Marian Stamper never got any law on him so

Thomas: No he never got in any trouble over it anyway

Meade: What other stories do you remember about old timers like that, about other killings and things like that?

Thomas: My dad was telling me about some old timers, it’s a place there, it’s three or four miles from where I live, it’s in Carter County side, said it was a solider boy come through there, they’d been these Halls, I don’t know what ones murdered him, they had a whole lot of money back in them days and throwed him back in this old well, after they done that they clamed they could see a ball of fire come out of the sky you know and hit by that well and burst all to pieces, then Billy Joe Rose, he’s in his forties, early forties I say him and guy by the name of Charles Herbert Gillman, when to Olive hill to see a movie, they claimed they saw it one night and they run all the way home. It was a fiddler and a banjo player by the name of Row and Jack Dar, that walking you know on *Georgie Row*, that was the last tunes they played, they went to this picnic and they had a big platform built, you know playing for square dances and there were some guys, but mother(?) and Joe Stamper probably remembers who it was, they got into a fight and they killed both of them that day, the Dars that was the last tunes they say those two played there that day, *Georgie Row*

Meade: Does that Georgie Row have words to it?

Thomas: yeah it that was the same thing as Polish My Shoes in the Middle of the Week, you know same tune, some of the words was in Polish my shoes in the middle of week and on Sunday make them shine, and when I see that pretty little girl I’m going to make her mine, or something you know, like that that was in Georgie Row

Meade: Does anybody know the words to that then? Does Joe know that?

Thomas: I don’t know he might know more of them than that

Meade: Well I wanted you to talk about this Still House Branch(?) now, now what about the title, Still House Branch now that’s what you call it right? Where did you hear that title?

Thomas: I heard it from Perry Reily and my father from old timers, he got it from Bis Fannan I guess and you know my grandfather called it that and Delbert Richmond, Thurston Stamper and Joe, that’s what all them called it

Meade: Called it what?

Thomas: *Still House Branch and Brown Stream*

Meade: Now that's *Brown Stream*?

Thomas: Yeah. Brown Stream's what they called it

Meade: What does that mean?

Thomas: Well it's like, you know when they'd make moon shine, that time if it got too hot it'd be a brown steam you know come out of the coil where the whiskey comes through. I guess that's what it meant, I've seen it myself (laughing)

Meade: (laughing)

Thomas: coming through, it look brown lookin I'd have to put it back and rerun it then. You know it'd get too hot you have to keep cold water over it

Meade: How do you make moonshine now?

Thomas: Well you get you a wooden barrel and you get ya some cracked corn, put fifty pound of barrel and fifty pound of sugar and you put warm water in that, maybe you'll put a big cake of yeast or something to start it to workin and the first time it'll take it maybe two weeks to work off and you put it in your boiler and they used to take dough and dough around the thing, you had to have a hole to empty it in to put your buckets in to dip your beer in and out of it, then they'd dough around that with flour and when the flour baked it got the steam wouldn't come out, and then some of them used a thump keg, a little keg, the lead pipes would run from the cap on the still and then the coil would go in that too and they'd dough around that and then you had water on the coil in another barrel, you'd have a hole in the bottle of it where all, you know you'd drill it into madders in the bottle where your coil would stick out and then you filled that full of water, and that there steam off of that made whiskey some way coming through there. If ever I get a chance I'd show ya (laughing)

Meade: (laughing)

Thomas: when you come down

Meade: Anyway that's, you've mentioned a whole bunch of titles for this, this *Still House Branch*, now what are the titles you've heard for that?

Thomas: I've heard *Johnny Bring the Jug Around the Hill* too

Meade: This from Kiesinger?

Thomas: Yeah, and you know them people up around Maurs Allen called it that and other fiddlers I run into other people you know hear *Johnny Bring the Jug Around the Hill*

Meade: Are there words to it?

Thomas: Not as I know of

Meade: Now your mother heard that as what, *Little Rabbit*? No the other tune's *Little Rabbit*

Thomas: Yeah she said that was something like *Still House Branch*, something you know like it

Meade: like *Little Rabbit*?

Thomas: Yeah

Meade: Did she sing all the words to it?

Thomas: No. Never did hear any I don't think

Meade: How about this *Feed my Sheep Some Corn*? Sheeps and hogs in the pasture

Thomas: Well I never have heard any fiddler play that, I just learned that from her whistling, she learned that from her daddy

Meade: There are words to that one though?

Thomas: Yeah it's more to it than that. She might remember it, "Sheeps and the hogs gone to the pasture, Sheep said hog can't you run a little faster, go on there and hush your growling before I hear the wolves a howling"

Meade: You don't know what the means

Thomas: I guess there's a lot of wolves in that country you know during the olden times and the hogs didn't want the sheep to raise too much fuss they was afraid the wolves would him I guess (laughing). That's what it sounds like it'd be

Meade: There used to be wolves? Did you hear any stories about wolves?

Thomas: Yeah there's been wolves about four or five years ago I heard Dr. Webb on this wildlife thing, they trapped one on Tiger and called it a gray wolf

Meade: How about, you remember anybody telling you about any wolves way back in the olden days?

Thomas: No I've heard so many tales I couldn't remember, I heard them, a guy told me one morning he waked up and he had a German Shepherd dog there was mean and he had hounds too, he's dead now. They said one morning they waked up, looked out the window and there was a big wolf looking in the window and there was a big wolf looking in the window at him, had his feet up like that, there was a big snow and they figured he drift in, you know from some country where there was a big snow, none of the dogs, he shot it but he said, he tracked it about a mile or two but he never could, the snow was just in spots, the snow and it was getting dark and he went back, he shot it, he tracked it about two mile by the blood, he'd find it in these spots of snow. Now the dogs wouldn't run it. Said there was a big gray wolf standing up by the window, his bed was by the window, standing up on its hind feet looking up through the window

Meade: Probably just wanted to get warm

Thomas: It mighta wanted to shake hands with him (laughing)

Meade: (laughing)

Thomas: I heard a tail Russell Thorns, he's a living he told me about a boy, his mother sent him to the store or something or other and he had a riffle that would shot so many times and there was a pack of wolves and they found that many dead, that he had killed and he was torn all up they found some pieces of his bone. See it's a place in, over by West Union, Ohio they used to trap wolves there, called Wolf Pen. They took big logs, this Sunny Wesley told me, they sharpen them on the ends and stood them down by rock cleft you know and they had them a door in it and they'd take sheep and, it was a thick, it was in a lot leveler country there than it was around home, I've been over in there, lived there about three or four months, and you know this real thicket with a lot of cedars real thicket and there's some hills there you can't hardly see that far ahead of ya, in some places, they'd take a sheep or a goat or something and put it in there and when the wolves come to go in and get it they'd put up their sheep they'd catch it, maybe three or four at one time and go in there and kill it, while it'd be eating it they'd let this trap door down some how and then they'd go down and kill em. Said they killed all of our sheep, like that. I've lead off to go to Wolf Pen and have a picture made, it was Sunny Wesley who was aiming to do it, but we never did get to do it.

Meade: Mary do you want to ask him some questions? (addressed to a woman)

Mary: No (?)

Meade: We never got the title straight, John Rod Jemison or Jamison?

Thomas: Jameson I think is what

Meade: Jamerson?

Thomas: Yeah

Meade: Jamerson

Thomas: Yeah

Meade: Now was that just played by Maurs Allen?

Thomas: Jimmy Wheeler and Maurs Allen are the only two I ever heard play that tune

Meade: Also *Take me Back to*, what's it called?

Thomas: Jimmy Wheeler he called it *Take me Back*, no *Going Back to Old Kentucky* and Maurs Allen said he was a lot older than Wheeler, said he heard that long before Wheeler was born, said it was John, he told where the Jamerson lived, and old man by the name of John Rod Jamerson or Jemison or something like that lived, out on Shultz, back on the ridge, there's some of them still in around Garrison Jimersons I believe is there name. I believe it's Jimerson

Meade: Jimersons

Thomas: Yeah.

Meade: Did this John Rod Jimerson do anything, particularly that you know about? Is there any reason the made a song about him?

Thomas: No, not as I, Maurs never did tell me anything about it. Another fiddler used to come in from, it was Bob Glenn, he'd come in from West Virginia and he made base fiddles they said George called a guys telling them about it to go along the road with his fiddle case on his belt, be a walking the roads a playing his fiddle, and said he'd been there, Bob Glenn was there, they'd been telling him about Coal, said Coal had a big yellow looking fiddle, a Steiner I believe it was, said you could hear it a half a mile and said before Coal got to the house, about half a mile away, something like that said he got up on these bars you know where they sorta go through, take wagons and stuff, said they heard that fiddle and said Bob Glenn stopped, he was a real good fiddler, said that guy plays some of the prettiest notes and not played nothing ever I heard (laughing)

Meade: (laughing)

Thomas: and said, he went on took another road and went on there was a fork in the road and he thought he'd rest and he played some, said old George come through a few days later and they was telling him about Bob Glenn a being there and was telling him about what a good fiddler he was and old George talked funny said, he left he stayed around for a few days and he left and he met Bob Glenn some place, you know while he was gone, he come back said in about a month or two later and said "well I met that Glenn feller

you told me so much about, we had it out and I edged him.” (laughing) and said I edged him. You know that kindly beat him.

Meade: Yeah

Thomas: What was that guy you were telling me about

Meade: That was Charlie Daily

Thomas: What was the story there?

Meade: Well he, this Jr. Maggards lives in Davey’s Run, he lives above Hub Rodgers Charlie thought he was copying him playing the fiddle, and Charlie played a tune for me, it wouldn’t nobody playing but Charlie and he thought it was the closest to of em, said “that old guy that Jr.” said “I do this I do that, he’s the best copier if ever I seen,” said “I do this, I do this note and directly I clinged a bow on that son of a gun” said “that’ll take care of him” (laughing)

Thomas: (laughing)

Meade: I never heard of, and they called him bow clinger a bunch of em, we don’t call it to him to his face, you know a bunch of us all out talking and laughing we call him the old bow clinger.

Thomas: (laughing)

Meade: Yeah said, I claimed cause he played it there wouldn’t but one fiddle a going and he thought for sure that guy was playing note for note like (laughing)

Thomas: (laughing)

Meade: Where did you learn Martha Kendal?

Thomas: Well I’d learnt off and on for I’ll say ten or fifteen year ago, something like that and, during the time I was in you know around Springfield, Ohio I got some tapes from Bob Holland, I heard Doc Robertson on it and I took a lot his’n you know and the way I know him from other old fiddlers I put some of Docs in it

Meade: Who else played it?

Thomas: Well I’ve heard Bob Prater he, he’s pretty good on it he played, I mostly learned it from Bob Prater, and Alfred Bailey

Meade: Alfred Bailey, do you know him from way back?

Thomas: No, Bob Prater I learned it from him, I've known him pretty good for a while, way before I ever met Bailey

Meade: is he a good fiddler?

Thomas: Yeah he's a pretty good fiddler Bob Prater is. He knows a lot of old tunes I don't know, but I can't remember I've heard him play tunes you know I don't, he learned from his dad his daddy's way up in his nineties

Meade: still alive?

Thomas: Yeah

Meade: how old is Bob Prater?

Thomas: I'd say he'd be up maybe pretty close to sixty-five maybe, in his sixties anyway

Meade: Where were you going to say about Bailey before I interrupted you?

Thomas: I knowed Bob a long time before I knowed Alfred Bailey play it

Meade: Oh

Thomas: and I heard Bailey play it, he learned a lot of it Bob Prater too

Meade: the same

Thomas: Bob was the first man ever I remember hearing play Martha Kendal(?)

Meade: Did he learn it from Doc Roberts?

Thomas: No he didn't, he didn't sound nothing like Doc Roberts. He didn't put a lot of them pretty notes. Of course Bob does a fine job on it, but I took some of Doc's out you know and compared em and put some of each one of them in a tune I play Martha Kendal

Meade: Is that how you put together a fiddle tune?

Thomas: yeah a lot of times some of them, you know I head like now a days when if hear fiddler's got something or other better then I think the other one's got I'll tell it out and you know put it in the tune you know I think it should go in a good note like that

Meade: yeah

Thomas: wouldn't you?

Meade: Oh yeah

Thomas: Bob Prater's still around though isn't he?

Meade: Yeah

Thomas: he is

Meade: Yeah I know where he lives at

Thomas: Where does he live at?

Meade: He lives right, before you get into Fox Port, Kentucky

Thomas: is that pretty near you

Meade: No it's a long ways away from, I'd say it's at least forty miles, maybe fifty

Thomas: that's not too bad

Meade: Down there it is (laughing)

Thomas: (laughing)

Meade: where did you run into him then?

Thomas: Well during sixty-one, sixty-one I think is the first time I ever saw old Bob Prater

Meade: What were you doing?

Thomas: We got to playin on the radio, but I'd heard Bob before on the Morehead station Morehead, I'd say it was a during fifty-eight or nine along like that and his brother Harry Prater had a program on there and Bob would fiddle a tune, every now and then, and I went in there and got to playing with Joe Stamper there in Vanceburg there on WKKS, Bob Prater and them they come there and was praying (laughing) playing and then we got to going to his house, and fiddlin

Meade: yeah. Did he play pretty all the time?

Thomas: Yeah it was all the time. What he plays is old timey. It's be pretty good coming to the radio station an prayin while he was fiddlin (laughing)

Meade: (laughing) What are some of those stories you told me about Sammy? What was that one about the briefcase and

Thomas: Yeah when they stayed with me in Bousars, Ohio anybody else that come there he made out like he was a wheel of some kind, he'd get his little briefcase and he'd and he'd go in the back end of the trailer in the bedrooms he wouldn't let me or Rodger you now listen to him, what he was telling, and then he'd open the door and he said, "now you can step in" like it was big office or something, "now you can step in my place" he'd say. And Lord knows what he'd been a telling them, I don't (laughing)

Meade: (laughing)

Thomas: and his first one thing or something like, and we was a playin that tune *Back Yard Joe* and he didn't know it, I'd learned from Maurs Allen, he said "Buddy let me have your violin" and he said "that's not really the way *Back Yard Joe* goes," I said I learned it from a pretty old guy and he said "I don't care my grandfather wrote that tune"

Meade: (laughing) (?)

Thomas: yeah he'd go my grandfather wrote that tune

Meade: He didn't even know the song (laughing)

Thomas: No he didn't even know the song he'll tell it, we was going past Jim Wheeler's going to Bousars, me and Rodger, Cooper, Howard, Kagling, some of his brothers and we stopped by Jim Wheeler's and it's been I'll say three years ago and Sammy was with us, he'd went up there you know to stay some and he kept beggin you know to go up and we let him go and Sammy was pretty high on the booze and Jimmy Wheeler he's a real good fiddler, he was playing something and he jumped up and said "Mr. Wheeler let me see your violin a minute that ain't exactly the way that goes."

Meade: (Laughing)

Thomas: And now Jim's eyes got that big nearly and he was pushed back. The next time I come through there they said "that guy," said "you're a good fiddler but" said "that little colored guy he might learn to play a fiddle some time" Jim and his sisters, but he's got a long ways to go yet. Kindly made him mad said "Mr. Wheeler let me see your violin this ain't exactly the way it goes," and now he couldn't ever play the tune either

Meade: (laughing)

Thomas: like that he just wanted to say something, you know somebody like that cause they were getting some pretty good notes or something. And Jim didn't know how to take him or anything he just pushed his chair back, his eyes got that big looked like

Meade: (laughing)

Thomas: Jim was a real good fiddler he can read music or anything, but he learnt by ear you know

Meade: who did he learn from?

Thomas: he learned from his daddy and Acey Neil, I guess other old fiddlers

Meade: Who was his daddy?

Thomas: I can't remember his name and then I've heard him talk, I've heard Jim and Maurs Allen both talk, about Chester Pick, that was Forest Pick's uncle said he was a good fiddle player

Meade: What do you think of Forest Picks, playin'?

Thomas: I think he's pretty good on some of the tunes. I don't like the way he acts towards any other fiddler

Meade: We may just skip him and you know not worry about him, he's kinda mean I guess

Thomas: yeah, I like some of his tunes I thought he, really put an old time feels in em I don't think he bows em out, you know like Allan and Acey Neil and them guys did. Unless he, you know it's been a few years since I've heard him, maybe it's been eight, well I can tell you the last time, it was in, sixty-seven I think is the last before I heard Forest Pick fiddle

Meade: Yeah. Did you ever hear this Eugene McFarlin?

Thomas: I heard a little bit of tape Maurs Allen has

Meade: yeah. But you've never seen him?

Thomas: No, I never have met him

Meade: he lives across the river from Vanceburg or something doesn't he?

Thomas: Yeah across back in Ohio there some place. What I heard he had some tune song, old timey and I heard one, Ed Hailey's got on this tape he played, I don't know the name of it Maurs Allen said it's about as good he'd heard Hailey play. He said it was about as good on that one tune that he ever heard anybody play, when I was at Maurice's house, back in the summer. He said McFarlin done about as good on it than any man he ever heard play.

Meade: What had you ever heard about Ed Hailey you self, besides being a good fiddler? Any stories on him?

Thomas: Well I heard he used to, Gordon Whitley told me he used to take him over there and they'd get moonshine, he said he'd stay up as high as a day and a night time and play long, and play

Meade: You didn't hear any other stories about him did you?

Thomas: No

Meade: Did you hear a lot of talk about him?

Thomas: Yeah I hear a lot, every place you go nearly you'd hear of Ed Hailey

Meade: Would you say that he's about the most famous of the old time players?

Thomas: Well I really don't know they claim that John Kebler, through that country, was about the best. Elva Green told me to hear them said John Kebler was about the best on horn pipes he ever heard through that country.

Meade: Who was John Kebler?

Thomas: That was Maurs Allen's uncle. They said on horn pipes he could beat all of em. He said you know he played em all good I guess but he said on horn pipes he had Hailey and Keizer and all of em beat, so Maurs Allen told me that.

Meade: Yeah

Thomas: Now I heard Sanford Kelly, I met him one time before he passed away, he was a braggin on Ed Hailey. He said he was about the smooth a fiddler as ever heard

(skip in the recording)

Meade: I thing I, now you learned these tunes from your mother's whistling right?

Thomas: yeah, different ones I did

Meade: Now there were a lot of whistlers in your family weren't there?

Thomas: Yeah, my uncle Eavy Richmond, my mother's brother, he won every whistling contest throughout the country then

Meade: Whistling contest?

Thomas: Yeah through the country they'd have whistling contests and my Uncle Tom and my Uncle Delbert's living yet, he's awful good too

Meade: They just whistle fiddle tunes?

Thomas: Yeah it's fiddle tunes

Meade: Were there many? I mean when would they have these whistling contests, because I've never heard of them before.

Thomas: **I imagine that was back before I was born I heard them talking about they'd all gather up, you know and see who was the best whistlers**

Meade: Were there prizes?

Thomas: I don't remember, I mean I never heard them say, but I know Eavy Richmond beat them all and through the country during that time. He didn't do nothin. He didn't play any instruments. The only one out of the family didn't do nothing, but he was the best whistler out of all of them.

Meade: Well would he whistle real fancy?

Thomas: Well just hoedowns, *Floppy Eared Mule* and stuff like that.

Meade: Can you whistle like that yourself?

Thomas: No I never could whistle.

Meade: You mean would he trill and things like that, or you don't know?

Thomas: No, I wouldn't know. Now he had, the son did I think, Adrian Richmond, claimed he could whistle a mocking bird, sounded like birds a flying you know like a flock of quails or something flying. He could make all them kinds of noise

Meade: I know that's funny, but how about fiddling contests did they used to have them back in the days of your grandfather?

Thomas: I never knowed of him to ever be in any of, you know going fiddle in any. I heard all of the people say he was awful good, about the best there was in our country, you know him and Bias Fannan

Meade: Now who is this Bias, would that be B-I-A-S?

Thomas: Yes I guess

Meade: Who was he, he hadn't, you were talking to Gus about him

Thomas: That was Esner Fannan's father, you know the banjo player I learned *Poosum up a Simmon Tree* from, and my dad used to go to his house when he was real small, we

lived back on a ridge and he lived down a hollow and he'd go down there and have him to play for him, he said he was awful good.

Meade: He's about your grandfather's age?

Thomas: Yeah, or maybe older than my grandfather a little maybe.

Meade: What tunes did you, come from him?

Thomas: the ones I play?

Meade: Yeah

Thomas: *Possum up a Simmon Tree* and *Feed my Horse Corn and Hay*

Meade: There's a Perry Riley version of that too.

Thomas: Yeah Perry Riley learned it from him and I learned it from Perry Riley. He said Bias was the only man he ever heard play that around.

Meade: Which one? Both of them?

Thomas: No, *Feed my Horse Corn and Hay*.

Meade: Does that have any words to it?

Thomas: Not as I know of. I asked Perry and he said he didn't never hear any words to it

Meade: Perry never sang any songs?

Thomas: No he never sings, used to sing a lots of songs I understand.

Meade: Yeah actually he sang a couple of songs that I can remember.

Well what do you know about your grandfather? What kind of guy was he?

Thomas: He was a good guy, from what I've heard. Everybody liked him, and you man what kind of work he done or anything? He was a farmer most of the time and he worked away in public jobs. There was job I remember, I don't remember whether he worked on the WPA or not, that was the road work back in Hoover's time I think, but I don't know, about all of them did, but I don't know whether he did or not.

Meade: Did you ever hear any funny stories about him?

Thomas: I was trying to study, yeah this one was too funny, my mother said he used to sit on a fence when it was pouring down the rain, old wood fences and drink whiskey, all the

time. They get drunk and he never did pay any attention to how hard a rain. My grandmother would get after him for drinkin, he's sit out in big storms, him and Cleve Masters would there and drink whisky on the fence rail and it pouring down the rain.

Meade: (laughing)

When did he die? Just about when you were born?

Thomas: I think I might have been around five or six years old, something like that. I can remember seeing him real well, two different times.

Meade: What did he look like?

Thomas: He was a heavy set man, and about five feet something, best I remember and had a big white mustache. His hair is real white when I seen him and gray and a big mustache. He wore a mustache all of his life.

Meade: Did he have, was he playing the fiddle?

Thomas: No, he never fiddled any then, he was real old. I think he was seventy-five along about, yeah he was about seventy-five that was just a short time before he died. They said he was about seventy-five or six when he died something like that.

Meade: Well how come your mother came to whistling those tunes for ya, just?

Thomas: Well I see there wouldn't any other fiddler, only Perry Riley, he come through every once in a while. He'd be gone out of the country for months, sometimes it would be two or three years before you'd ever see him. One time it was about fifteen year before we seen him, when I was, the first time he was there and then I remember, he come back about fifteen year, maybe longer and played again, and I never had a way of picking up these tunes, the only way was from her whistling em. My Uncle Delbert Richmond whistled a lot of em, her brother.

Meade: So you didn't hear many fiddlers when you were young?

Thomas: No, it was just Perry and I remember when I was younger I heard Rabbit John Holbrooks when I was small, you know I was telling you about.

Meade: What was the tune you learned?

Thomas: *Susan's Gone*, I learnt part of it, I remembered part of it from him. I learned the rest of it from Lloyd Keizer he played it on harmonica.

Meade: Did you listen to the radio and things when you were

Thomas: Well back then we never had no radio, I mean we got hold of them old battery radios, what do you, played them around, my brother got one, but I didn't remember any tunes on it. When it'd come on I was real small, I'd be in bed asleep. I never did learn anything off of the radio back then just

Meade: So when did you hear music when you were a kid, when you were playing the fiddle? Just from your mother's whistling?

Thomas: Yeah

Meade: You'd see guys occasionally fiddling then?

Thomas: One time or two I saw a guy by the name of Floyd Moore, I believe was his name, fiddled I was twelve years old. I saw him. You know he was playing on the streets in Vanceburg, Kentucky.

Meade: Was he a blind man?

Thomas: No, they'd just all gang up musicians and have, we lived in Greenup, then moved from near Olive Hill, Kentucky to on Shultz. It was about twelve mile or fifteen from Portsmouth, Ohio and when I had my fiddle and come back out home me and my dad, us we rode the bus down and they was playing there on the street, and I fiddled some. I was twelve years old.

Meade: So the first tunes you learned, what were the first tunes you learned?

Thomas: *Cluck ol' Hen* was the first tune I ever learned and then on the next day I couldn't think of it and she'd whistle, just start off on any of them nearly she'd whistle, I could never get that back in mind again. I learned *Old Joe Clark* the next one and this and that one.

Meade: Well name some more. The first tunes you ever heard you know.

Thomas: And like *Georgy Row*, that was an old cross key, *Going Down Town* they used to play that too. That was one of them and *Groundhog*, things like that.

Meade: Those have words to em didn't they?

Thomas: Yeah but she just whistled I never did hear her sing that much. I remember some words they'd say, "go on down town, go on down town, get along down to Vanceburg town take my tobacco down." That's about all I remember, you know.

Meade: You said you mom played the banjo too

Thomas: Yeah she played a little over handed and some thumb finger style like this,

Meade: What did she play on the banjo?

Thomas: *Cluck Ol' Hen* and *Sourwood Mountain*, *Cripple Creek* and different old timers like that

Meade: When did you pick up the banjo, later on?

Thomas: No, it was the first thing I ever did start a tune on. Dad got a banjo and I could start some kind of tune, I don't remember, then he sold the banjo, this guy come along could play the banjo, by the name of Dustin Rayburn. He sold the banjo for eight dollars. And another tune, I never would have thought of, when we were talking about my mother playing the banjo, they used to play one called *Blue Rooster*.

Meade: *Blue Rooster* (laughing)

Thomas: Yeah

Meade: How'd that go?

Thomas: I wouldn't know, I'd have to go back and get her to whistle it or something for me to try and get it

Meade: Was it a fiddle tune that she played on a banjo?

Thomas: Yeah I think it was a fiddle tune. Played it on the banjo, called *Blue Rooster*.

Meade: Was it must of a tune or do you

Thomas: Well I can't really remember they tuned it in a cross key thing, to play it. That's been I'll say twenty year ago or something like that

Meade: when was the last time you heard you mom play the banjo?

Thomas: I'd say it's been ten or fifteen years, something like that, I imagine. Back when my dad was living and my older brother got killed, they always had old banjos and stuff like that, but now that they've passed away, my dad and them we never did have any, I stuck to fiddle then, we never do have any more banjos or anything.

Meade: Did your dad play banjo too?

Thomas: Yeah he played the over handed style.

Meade: What did he play?

Thomas: He'd played like *Row on John*, *Sourwood Mountain*, *Eliza Jane*, *Cripple Creek* and stuff like

Meade: How about that *Row on John*, how did that go?

Thomas: I really don't know how that, you mean the words to it?

Meade: Yeah, were there any words?

Thomas: Yeah I remember him singin, "row on John, don't row so slow and how can I row when the wheels won't go."

Meade: What's that mean?

Thomas: I wouldn't know that was in that old song

Meade: Was there more to that?

Thomas: Yeah there was more but that's all I remember.

Meade: Now where did your dad come from? Just right there?

Thomas: Yeah Emerson, Kentucky right there where Bias Fannan, it's within I'd say two miles over from where I live at now.

Meade: So you folks didn't move much?

Thomas: No

Meade: Your mother's from here too right generally?

Thomas: Yeah. My father's people they traveled all the time, was gone up for two and three year at a time and nobody never known where they was at, and one of em, he had one uncle named Bill Thomas and he left when he was twelve years old, never did know what happened to him. He went up this holler and he come back when he was thirty, come down that holler, stayed around a week or two and he went back up they let him go back up everyday up the holler, and they thought he was just, and he left one day and went up the holler and never did seen or hear of him anymore.

Meade: Do you think he just left or maybe got killed or something?

Thomas: He might of, it was John Thomas, last count I ever heard of him he ran a store up in Portsmouth, Ohio, and Jim Thomas, that was my grandfather's brother, he died out in our country, was buried at the Stamper Cemetery. And then my grandfather Abe Thomas died in Wisconsin and he, they traveled all the time the Thomas' did. And Frank Thomas, it was a, I think it was nine boys and one girl, nobody never knowed what happened to him. I think Rolland Thomas died on Indian Creek, owned the mouth of it several miles from one end to the other, and I remember hearin my brother-in-law talking

about there was a Steyn come there, you know hunted treasure and things, this that or the other, he told his dad he'd bring an axe up there, he had something treed. My brother-in-law thought he meant up a tree you know like a squirrel or something, went up there and said "what do you need," said there was a bunch of em, pretty good sized trees, he said "I think I've found Rolland Thomas's treasures. Said that Geiger counter worked on it but they never dug down far enough, it's in the mouth of this holler, a big Beech tree. And then there was a Rolland Thomas they never did, not Rolland, Raison, that was a funny name.

Meade: Reason?

Thomas: Yeah. They don't know whatever happened to him. Jim Thomas, they said he traveled a lot. He was a traveling and he was way away from Kentucky someplace coming, walking through and he said to his big pond and all this big bunch of cattle was laying there and a big dog laying beside of em, and said this here cattle driver drove up and said "they're kindly tired aren't they?" and he said "yeah they are I've been a pushing them pretty hard and they've been a laying down to rest" and he said "what would you take for em?" and he sold this guys cattle and got in the brush and come on home and let this guy was driving them away, he sold em for ever what he could get out of em and hit the brush, took the brush and come on through to Kentucky. I don't know, I reckon it was real, in the southern part of Kentucky someplace, where that happened.

Meade: What do you mean took the brush?

Thomas: Well he got in the brush and traveled, where nobody could see him along the road, to keep from catching him

Meade: Yeah

Thomas: He said no telling what kind of war it was over that after he'd left (laughing). He done all kinds of stuff like that. For the fun of it lots of times.

Meade: yeah. So you didn't hear much music when you were a kid?

Thomas: No, I'd say, I'd have to study. I imagine about ten or fifteen year ago, when I really got to hear fiddle players you know, I never picked up any bow licks much.

Meade: Yeah. How did you fiddle when you were a kid, just the best you could?

Thomas: Yeah just, run the bow straight back and forward, kindly jerk it along

Meade: Weren't your mother, I mean once you were trying to learn your grandfather's tunes, I was going to ask you this before, how would you get them like your grandfather played them?

Thomas: Well I'd just play them like she whistled em, she can double note but I couldn't do it with a bow, but after, like I said I never did forget that, how the notes went, and it comes natural you know the older you get. One time I talked about quittin when Perry Riley was there, he said it took him ten or fifteen year to learn the bow lick. He said it come natural and I was talking to him a while back and he said, "you remember that time you told me you was aiming to quit because you couldn't," and I said, "yeah."
"You can really use it now," he said.

Meade: How did you get the keys right? Did your mother make sure you got the right key on the fiddle?

Thomas: Yeah and my uncle he knowed about, you know what keys too. Yeah my mother she knowed what keys. She'd play a fiddle a little bit.

Meade: Oh yeah?

Thomas: Yeah she never did play much. She'd always play the organ and sing. She knowed what keys he'd played them in. Yeah and I'll tell you another one the Thurstons, we used to play, I learned it, it was *Coon Dog*, I learned that from my grandfather Richmond. You know during her whistling.

Meade: Now what do you mean she could double note when she whistled?

Thomas: Well you know like you take your fingers and the bow you do double notes on the fiddle?

Meade: You mean do two notes at once?

Thomas: You know, I jsut call it single note you know when you run the bow backwards and forwards like that. Now you know you got to double with your wrist, well she'd do that whistling and Uncle Elvy and all of em.

Meade: Was she a good whistler too?

Thomas: Yeah I thought she was pretty good but nothing like her brothers. Nothing like Delbert and Elvy.

Meade: She just remembered lots and lots of tunes then.

Thomas: Yeah

Meade: What would she sing and play on the organ? Or would sing?

Thomas: Well you mean, she used to sing, just about any of those old songs that had words to em.

Meade: Like what?

Thomas: Like *Eliza Jane*, *Going Down Town*, stuff, there for a while she mostly played hymns, they belonged to the church. She usually played and sung hymn songs. And then when they went to doing that, that kindly left me a wondering about my fiddlin and where I learned my tune.(laughing)

Meade: (laughing)

You mean she wouldn't whistle for you any more?

Thomas: No they went to church a lot. They'd spend a lot of time you know singing hymns and things like that

Meade: Well did she think it was wrong?

Thomas: No she didn't think it was wrong, they liked to hear it there self. They worked real hard they'd get up before daylight, while dad was a working in the clay mines, we'd all work in the fields and things, we'd come in couldn't see how to get in hardly of a night a lot of the times. We'd work from sun up to sun down a hoeing corn, working in tobacco, stuff, hay and things like that. We'd pick it up with a fork we'd call a pitchfork. You know just haul it loose on wagons and sleds and things like that.

Meade: Yeah. Didn't have a tractor

Thomas: No just mules, wagons and things like that.

Meade: How long did you work on you family's place?

Thomas: Well before I left home down there, on public works, I was nineteen. I always worked for other people you know, on a farm and snake logs with a mule, ties, forty ties, that was before they quit makin em. And all kinds of work like that.

Meade: What public works did you go on? Where did you go?

Thomas: I went to Mansfield, Ohio and worked at a little place, a carpenter place. They called it Mansfield, West Union they called it. West Union Lumber Company or something like that. I was a stock boy I had to keep all the two by fours and the notches different on em, different notches and everything stacked a curtain way for em to get em like that.

Meade: Did you find that hard?

Thomas: For a few days I did maybe, a day or two, something like that I did. They had different ways of cutting notches and everything like that and different places in the two by fours and two by six and things. I hauled em and stacked em in the places, where the carpenters got em.

Meade: Now how about you fiddling when you were just, now you kept fiddling a like bit?

Thomas: Yeah, I'd play a little bit. When I worked in Mansfield and played much my brother didn't like it he wouldn't hardly allow me to play around or anything, like I kinda never got to do much and I come back home, in fifty-six, I stayed gone and you know worked off and on and went to Busaras with one of my sisters and stayed up there a while and then I went back home and went to farming again in sixty-six and then I played some. And when I worked, at fifty-seven I never played any for a year, a year and a half when I worked in a factory

Meade: Yeah

Thomas: and it's been, I'll to count em, four, about four summers ago, about three years, I didn't play none for a year. Didn't amount to anything, you know I worked and didn't have any time for anything. I'd have to get up be on the job by six o'clock in the morning, you would feel like playing when you come in.

Meade: Yeah

Thomas: I'd lay down and take naps and worked on Swan's Rubber Company, in Busaras, Ohio.

Meade: Yeah. Now tell me how you got back to really fiddling.

Thomas: Well I thought about quitin for good when I come back from Charlie Daily, summer before last, some of em, Lloyd Keizer and them was telling him about me and they got me over there, I couldn't hardly bow out a fiddle, you know I hadn't been playin and he got me over there and he heard me fiddle and he kept coming over there and begged me not to quit. And I got to doing several shows around there, like Memory Days and Grayson and going. We played on TV a time or two and I got back interested in it again

Meade: Now when was this?

Thomas: It was the summer before last when I was a fixing to quit and he'd heard me on

Meade: Two years ago?

Thomas: Yeah

Meade: Go on with the story.

Thomas: I'd been a working in Busaras, Ohio, you know Swan's Rubber Company, and I'd never played any up there hardly and I come back and they was having some music

party over there, some fiddling, and I went over there one night with Lloyd Keizer, he told them about me. Me and him used to play a lot together and Charlie Daily he heard me and kept coming after me and he kept begging me not to quit. Hadn't been for him I'd a been quit, and last two years I really, you know got interested in it again. And learnt the bow you know a lot in the last two years.

Meade: These last two years?

Thomas: Yeah. Real that's where I've learned more, these last two year then I've ever learnt in my life near.

Meade: When were you playing with Maurs Allen and all that?

Thomas: Well I'd go up there and little at him, it's been I'd say seven or eight or ten year ago, best I ever remember, ten or fifteen year ago when I first met him. I wouldn't have a fiddle half the time, I'd go up and listen and hear him anyway. And my sister lived just down the river, you know from him, I'd go and practice on Maurs's fiddle, I'd go down there, he got to where he wanted me to stay with him all the time. We'd sit around and we'd play. I learned a lot from Maurs on his own fiddle like that. At times I wouldn't have a fiddle I'd get without one and have to

Meade: So you were working up in Ohio just a couple of years ago then?

Thomas: Yeah, it was a little over two year ago. About three, I worked up to about two year ago, something like that.

Meade: You mean just kept having one job after another?

Thomas: No, I just worked the same. No, now I worked, you know put in one summer farming since I've been back, that was the way it was, and then two year ago, that's been going over there about two year, I got to you know practicing again and I've learned a lot of tunes since I've you know got interested. I've learned a lot of them since I've been going over there about two year

Meade: Well you met Gus about two year ago didn't ya?

Thomas: Yeah that's when I really was a practicing then you know when I started going to Frailey's festival. I met him summer before last too, the same summer you know when I come back, the following summer when I come back from Busaras a working, at Renfro Valley, but I was plum out of practice then. We played a couple tunes down at Renfro Valley that night on stage with Hugh Rodger, but I couldn't even bow *Billy and the Low Ground* much then.

Meade: When did Bob Harlem hear ya?

Thomas: During fifty-six, no I mean sixty-six, the year my dad passed away. I was playing a little old club or bar there in Springfield called, Dick's Café but I couldn't play the old tunes out, you know bow them out as good as I can now.

Meade: when you're bowing them out now your still remember your mother's whistling and playin it back?

Thomas: Yeah I'm remembering the way she whistled.

Meade: Do you say you sound like

Thomas: Yeah she told me, the other day, she said I play more like her father than anyone she'd ever heard. I remember us talking, she said "I haven't heard anybody, you come closer to playing like him than anyone I've ever heard."

Meade: I didn't realize, well you've kinda been fiddling on a couple years ago

Thomas: yeah off and on, there you see it was one summer, before I went to Ohio to work on a farm hard, had tobacco and hay, I didn't fiddle any that summer. I went up there and then that summer following I didn't hardly play any, I got a job. I fiddled a little off and on, you know when I go someplace and they'd a fiddle, see I've been without a fiddle for a long time, never had any

Meade: Yeah

Thomas: and I'd go to people's house and fiddle, like you know last summer and this summer past I never had any fiddle, that I know of, but I'd go over to Daily's on the weekends and practice. Like sometimes I'll go on a Friday and I'll fiddle and play some place on Saturday, I'd go and stay all night. Went and play sometimes up to Sunday a lot of times. And sometimes I wouldn't get to go for two or three weeks or a month.

Meade: When did you do all your running around, you know while you were drinking and stuff?

Thomas: You mean what did I do?

Meade: yeah when was all that?

Thomas: It's been

Meade: I mean you quit almost a year ago wasn't it

Thomas: yeah it's going on eight months I think. During that two year too I fiddled a lot while I was drinkin too, you know where I quit in May, I fiddled a lot with guys, you know when I was out and be a drinkin, like that. Seemed like a lot of tunes I could learn with I was a drinkin more. I could remember em. And before I quite drinkin too, a lot of

those old tunes I could get up and seems they'd come back to you quicker seems like, you'll remember, they'd come to your mind more, when I was a drinkin too.

Meade: When you're playing, I mean like Charlie Daily, they don't like to hear the old tunes too much do they?

Thomas: He likes old tunes but he'd rather hear hymns. He likes hearing me fiddling them he said, but he usually plays hymns. Yeah he like's *Katy Hill* and *Billy in the Low Ground* are his two favorite tunes.

Meade: How about when you were playing with the bluegrass, that was just here and there?

Thomas: Yeah, it was some in Columbus, Ohio and Springfield, Busaras and down though our area in Portsmouth.

Meade: How long were you away from Kentucky?

Thomas: Well I'd go back maybe once every two or three months, when I was in Ohio. I've been away as high as a year at a time. I mean as long as a year at a time.

Meade: Yeah