

Interview Log

Interviewee: Preston and Sally Cherry **Tape #:** MAAF/KF/MD/FT7.31.314

Interviewer: Kelly Feltault **# of Tapes:** 1 of 1

Date: 7/31/98 **# of Sides:** 2

Location: Berlin MD; in Preston's home

Topic: truck farming; vegetable huckstering; railroad work; planting by the signs; growing up on a farm; religion; Harrison nursery; fruit picking; storing vegetables in back yard kilns

Corresponding Photography Log #:

Comments: File name: Mdft3l4.doc. See Fieldnotes: FN07.31.98. *Italics* indicate emphasis; [brackets indicate additional information not on the tape or asides by fieldworkerj; "quotations indicate direct transcription."

Diana and Gabe Purnell recommended that I interview Preston. When I arrived his daughter Sally was there with her daughter who spends the summers with her grand parents on the family farm.

BEGIN SIDE A

BIO: says name; Preston R. Cherry; born in or near Cherriton VA on the shore; moved to Painter Va in 1921; farming a small farm; raised by uncle; later uncle became a local minister; moved again to other side of Painter VA; not making any money farming so left; moved to Berlin in 1938, been here since;

OCC: picked fruit for Harrison nursery; biggest labor jobs/company; then at the poultry plant; quit that and started working on the railroad; worked there until 1973; retired;

RR: maintained track; trackman; worked in a section gang; put in new rails; new track and ties; Baltimore Eastern RR company' had 2I^d heart attack and then left; on disability retirement;

MEMORIES: wrecks he had to help fix; one in Cherriton back of Webster's canning factory; freight train derailed;

Tools used for this; tongs that looked like ice tongs;

Other wrecks; one in DE; working in a crew; 2 section crews in Berlin; one for Baltimore and Easton other for PA; merged later on; Conrail had it then;
Hard work; decent pay though; support family; steady work; pay on railroad was 75 cents an hour when he started; better than the chix factory; in the 50s; left in 1973, couldn't pass the physical exam;

Story of conversation he had with the doctor who wouldn't pass him; rails way 3-500 lbs each and 2 men handle them; lightest rail is 85 lbs per yard and standard is 30 ft. long; 6 men handle a rail; doctor recommended he take his disability retirement; working short handed; foreman; getting cranky; what foremen did; lining up track; [describes gandy dancing but doesn't call it that]; spiking it down, hammering;

Learning how to use one; not everyone could use it; hammer weighed 9 lbs; 2 guys working on one spike; not supposed to do it because it was dangerous but needed to finish the job; had to know how to hit in rotation;

Foreman read out rules everyday before work; rules were designed by union and reps from union had to witness this every morning;

TRUCK FARMING: sold to Ocean City; grew any kind of vegetables; "huckstered to ocean city in summer" sugar corn, beans, tomatoes;

SC: remembers working on the farm; worked it even when he was on the railroad; she and her brothers would work in the evening too when father would come home from the RR; turn on the truck head lights onto the field to work at night;

She and her sister's jobs were to carry the plants when planting; this when young; job related to size and age; carried baskets and water and stuff, selling vegetables to O.C was her first taste of having your own business; saw father doing it;

HUCKSTERING VEGGIES: kids jobs were to go door to door; sell vegetables; sold to stores and tourists; sold more to hotels and motels and restaurants and private homes;

OCEAN CITY: very diff. Back then; too many people; used to be able to wander the streets and stop; go down side streets now too busy; work hard to take care of the children; feed and educate them;

SC: all worked on the farm; kids would work in pairs and see who could sell the most; competition between them; who could cover the most territory; who could out sell;

PC: older kids got a kick out it

SC: father had a special call when he was driving through the streets; people would come out; had regular customers; kids had own customers; always told them to be up front, be straight make sure your customers get the freshest;

PC: demos selling calls he used

SC: describes how they did it; tourists would also want vegetables; sometimes gather a crowd;

O.C. stopped at 14th st. back then; no high rises etc; she did it in the 60s and 70s

PC: been huckstering before the coast guard station was there;

Segregation on the beaches; certain days for the Af/Am to go to the beaches; Henry Hotel still standing; black hotel; used to be some cottages owned by an African American woman near the ice plant;

PLANTING BY THE SIGNS/MOON:

SC: moon signs; always planting by that;

PC: castrated pigs by moon; ordering seeds from catalogues; ordered moon book one year for veggies; how to plant diff. Veggies based on moon;

SC: harvesting potato story: grow under ground; so would drive tractor over ground and "diss" up the dirt; smaller kids would pick up potatoes; how dad played trick on her picking up hibernating snakes;

Storing potatoes; pack in burlap and then straw for winter; bury them in a mound;

PC: making the kiln outside for the vegetables to winter over: dig hole, shallow; cover with pine shats; put in veggies in certain place; can keep watermelons too; eat watermelons on thanksgiving; cover with shats then cover with dirt; pack down; gets hard; shats keep them dry and warm;

SC: always ordered diff. Kinds of veggies, never knew what he was planting; always had a kid's vegetable garden; always a fun row: popcorn and stuff never sold;

PC: raised a white tomato once; story of that; loved them; no acid to them; much sweeter; [still has old catalogs] white watermelon too;

SC: peanuts, gooseberries etc; fun things;

PC: how he got the property; 3 story chicken house but burned down; accumulating more land; teaching kids how to drive on the farm on the tractor; story of Sally wrecking tractor;

SC: raised lots of animals; goats, pigs, dogs, cats; nicknamed dad Dr. Doolittle; patching up animals; ducks and geese;

PC: pleasure being on the farm; raising food for yourself; don't have to buy everything at the store; still growing things here; went out of hog business when got sick but had 75-80; butcher in Nov. and Dec. made sausage and scrapple; smoke it and salt it;

Sold some on occasion; packing salt on meat; smoked salt; "had something worth putting in a frying pan" talks of smell of good ham;

Scrapple making; wife made it; doesn't know how; used liver and tongue; corn meal and seasoning; even make own lard

END SIDE A
BEGIN SIDE B

Describes making lard; wife made canned preserves; no freezer so that's how you keep it; freezer was better because didn't have to buy jars;

SC: fresh home grown food; only went store for staples; jobs you did to help her and how you learned by doing little jobs; grew up having winter food in the freezer and pantry; freezer was separate a big chest freezer; always had that; plus you had the kiln so who cares if it snows you always had food; very self sufficient;

If the moon was about to change you had to work until everything was done because dad planted by the moon; working by truck light;

Other jobs on the farm; memories of working on the farm; values it gave her; learned basic biology and got interested in science; learned about life cycles, death, growth, birth; went into science field; studies life science of bacteria now;

PC: planting techniques; placing seeds a special way;

[preston is yawning now, looks tired]

REMEMDIES: tea from wild cherry bark; diff. Teas; children dreaded it; good for colds; use bark on the sunny side of the tree;

SC: why she brings her daughter here every summer; passing things on learning from Preston;

PC: tomato worms; stinging you; dusted tomatoes with seven dust;

SC: snakes in gardens and rows; thorns on leaves of cucumbers etc; always carried a pole to move the leaves away

[I am reminded of the time I found a snake under my cucumber plant in NC, and I didn't have a pole to move the leaves but used my hands]

snake stories; in chix house; one almost bit Preston;

CHURCH TRADITIONS: PC: more Baptists in VA where he born so he's Baptist; wife Methodist; he returns to Baptists church; couldn't understand Methodist sermons; goes to Snow Hill to church; story of this; joining the church; Mt. Zion Bapt. Church

SC: grew up in both churches; morning went to Methodist then in the afternoon to the Baptist church; great grandmother was founder; Baptist church had down home gospel singing; more lively but liked both;

Big family tradition was family prayer; grew up with that, every Sunday before breakfast; that's how Preston was raised; read from bible sing a song; father lead a prayer; now does it with New Year's;

Played softball with family and neighbor kids; had enough kids to fill a team; grew up together; all boys whether white or colored would meet in their field to play baseball every Sunday;

Segregation of Ocean City; [Sally gets more to the heart of it here]; other entertainments they had; going to the drive in in their pajamas in the back of the truck; made own fun, more creative;

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