

INTERVIEW WITH KERMIT CARL SANDERS
CONDUCTED BY J.R. ASH
for the
KENNESAW COLLEGE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
Monday, April 23, 1979

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Mr. Sanders was sheriff of Cobb County from 1957 until 1976 when he retired from office after serving Cobb County for 20 years. Prior to being elected sheriff, Mr. Sanders served with his father as a deputy sheriff.

S = Sanders

A = Ash

A Mr. Sanders, when were you born?

S I was born the 30th of May, 1908.

A Where were you born?

S I was born on Austell Road, and I moved to town when I was about four years old. My father became a city policeman. He worked for a dollar a day. From the city, he went to work for Mr. Ed Swanson who was the sheriff of the county at the time. This was in 1914. He served two terms as a deputy sheriff under Ed Swanson. Mr. Swanson did not see fit to run again for sheriff and my father ran and was elected. He served two terms and went out of office in 1933. He was out of office for twelve years and ran again in 1944. He served one year and three months and died in office on April 13, 1946. Harry Scroggins took over the office of sheriff for the balance of that term and was re-elected for two more terms. I ran against Mr. Scroggins and was elected in 1956 and took office in 1957, and I served until 1976.

A So your father served for two terms as sheriff. Is that correct?

S Two terms, two different times with a twelve year interval.

A How long was the term of the sheriff back then?

S Four years.

A You were more or less raised around the jail then, weren't you?

- S Yes, I moved to the jail when I was ten years old. My brother and I had to fire the furnace to keep the prisoners warm. Back in those days we did not have many prisoners. We had anywhere from one to fifteen. In those days, seventy-five percent of them were blacks. We did not have too much crime back then. We had an occasional homicide or burglary, but the main thing the sheriff did back in those days was to try to keep the whiskey business down.
- A Do you remember a lot of whiskey stills back then?
- S Yes, I have been on a lot of raids on whiskey stills. I remember the first man I ran down on foot. I was sixteen and a half years old. My daddy and I and Roy Swanson (one of the deputies) were out on Johnson Ferry Road; and back in those days, it wasn't paved. We would just pull across the road and block it. My daddy said, "You get under the wheel; and when I flash my light, you pull across the road and block it." It was night and he was carrying a flashlight. Papa flashed the light, and here came a car down the road. He came right up to my car and to the right and jumped out and ran. My daddy came down and handed me the gun and flashlight and said, "Catch him son." I ran him about a quarter of a mile and kept the flashlight on him. I was young and a bit on the scary side. I caught him and brought him back in. We brought him into the jail. His name was Smith; and he said, "Mr. Tom, how about letting me get something to eat before you lock me up." So he told Mr. Swanson to take him up there and get him something to eat. We took him up to the restaurant. He was sitting there eating; and he said, "Roy, who was that fellow that outran me and caught me? He sure could run." Roy said, "That's him sitting over there (pointing to Sanders)." He threw his knife and fork down and said, "You mean to tell me I let that young kid catch me!" I guess that incident set me afire. I thought more of law enforcement than anything else. My father was not in good health, and I quit school to work with him. I only had one year of high school at Marietta High.
- A You went to Marietta High?
- S Yes. I quit and went to work with my daddy regularly then, chasing whiskey. We caught thousands and thousands of gallons of whiskey. It would be hard to estimate. Back in those days we caught a lot of "red" whiskey, which was expensive whiskey. It was coming from Florida and going to Chicago. We caught a number of Al Capone's cars. I know John Hood, who worked with me from 1928 to 1932, helped me a lot. We would sit in front of the courthouse; and a car would come by; and we could tell it had a load of whiskey because it had saddle springs. There were little bumps in front of the courthouse, and they would give it away. We discovered one car like this, and we ran the driver up to Morgan Hill the other side of Kennesaw and pulled him over. There were two men in a

brand new Nash Club Coupe. John said, "Have not you got a load of red whiskey on this car?" He said, "Yea." One man was doing the driving and one was doing the talking. He said, "Yes, there is a load of red whiskey; but you are not going to take it." And when he said that, he came up with a Burger and Riot shotgun. John told him we did not want to get killed over a load of red whiskey. The man said, "If you don't want to get killed, driver, drive on." Well, we started chasing him and went through Acworth, which was the way you had to go then. We stopped at Shipe's service station and told them to call Cartersville and tell Sheriff George Gaddis to block the road. We knew we could overtake him; but we did not; and he turned off to the left. We came back through the old road by Allatoona and saw where he had turned off. We saw the car sitting in a pine thicket. John had a shotgun, and he said he was going to get in back of the trees and told me to go to Acworth to get help. So I ran and jumped in the car; and as I was going toward Acworth, Sheriff Gaddis and his men came up. They walked toward the man's car, and he came out with a gun. They told him if he didn't drop it, they were going to kill him. He dropped the gun, and the driver jumped out and ran. I came back to town and got the dogs, and we ran him eight miles across the Allatoona Mountain and caught him. Al Capone never gave us any trouble. Some of his drivers told us if he got by with it, it was good luck; but outside Chicago he would not have anything to do with law enforcement. We did catch some big stills. We caught one putting out five gallons a minute. One was on Six Flags Road, which used to be Lower River Road. One of the biggest ones we ever caught was on Spring Road in Smyrna. They had 1,834 gallons of whiskey made there.

A I guess all these areas were wooded and not built up as they are now.

S That's right. I have had a lot of experiences, I was a pretty good car driver, and I remember going up State 5 and would meet a car we suspected of having a load of liquor on it. I would turn around real quick, and before I could get to them, they had bailed out and run.

A I guess there were a lot of good chases back in those days too.

S Yes, and I was a pretty good driver. We had a Chrysler Imperial and they knew they could not outrun the thing. Another experience was right before Christmas, 1932. Cecil Bullard and I were over on Bankhead Highway and saw these cars winding down, coming down into Mableton. We let out after them, and it was the Hall boys. And one was blocking to keep us from catching the whiskey. He did not want to let us by; so I took a running start and hit the fender and he went out through the field. We went down to a little church, and the liquor car turned off to the right. It had been raining. I hit him in the back, and my

bumper caught under his. It tore my radiator up. He jumped out and ran about a quarter of a mile, and we caught him. He said, "Hello Kermit. How are you doing?" I said, "I don't know you. Who are you?" And he said, "My name is Green." I said, "I don't know a Green." "No," he said, "my name is Altus Hall. I named my boy after you." He does have a boy named Kermit who is a very prominent citizen in Marietta today. The Hall boys were good whiskey people, you know. They weren't violent or anything. They were good people. Back in those days there was a lot of good people who fooled with whiskey. I know I have been with my daddy many times during the Depression, and we would get a lot of reports of people selling whiskey. He would go to them and say, "Now Joe, I know you are selling whiskey; and if you don't quit, I am going to have to catch you." And if they didn't quit, he would catch them. He caught his own brother that way. His brother tried to get him with a shotgun, and my daddy took it away from him. My daddy had to pay his fine after catching him.

A Well, back then during the Depression I guess that was a good way to make a little money.

S Well, people were having an awful hard time. I guess my daddy let it go as long as he could, because he knew they needed the money. People selling whiskey weren't violent people. They were just trying to make a living. Course, I have always said (and my daddy did, too) that probation was a failure. Course, back in those days, the sheriff was under a "fee system." My daddy always said that was bad, which was later changed from fee system to salary.

A Explain the fee system to me. I'm not sure I know what it is.

S Well, if you caught a car and a man with a load of whiskey, you got about 95% of what the car was sold back or what the car brought. A big salary you would only get about 35% of it, which was the fee system. If you caught a man drunk and fined him \$30, your share would probably be \$11 or \$12. Back in those days, you had to catch everybody you could to make a living out of it.

A So the fee system gave you an incentive to enforce the law.

S Judge John Wood helped my daddy out more than anybody I guess. He was later to become a congressman. Sometimes we were catching three or four loads of red whiskey going north in a day. He lived at Canton. My daddy would call him and say, "How much do I fine them, and how much to get the car back?" So he finally told me daddy, "You fine them and tell them what the car is worth. Don't be bothering me about it." I don't guess it was legal, but it worked all right. Several of the drivers from Chicago would ask my daddy, "How did you know we had a load of liquor on there?" He said, "Little bird told me." One fellow said, "I wish I could find that damn bird. I would kill it."

- A When you caught someone hauling liquor, you would tell them what their car was worth and they would have to buy the car back from you?
- S They could buy the car back. The judge would sign an order when he would come back to town. See, we only had court here twice a year then. It was a small town and small county. It was the Blue Ridge Circuit. He would sign an order; and my daddy would let them have the car back, say for \$500 to \$1,000 --ever what he thought the car was worth. They were glad to buy it back and pay the fine and get gone. We sat in front of the courthouse one day (John Hood and myself) and a two and a half ton truck came by. It was empty, apparently, but you could not see through those beams; and I told John, "I believe that truck's got a trap on it." John said, "Ah, that truck don't have a trap on it." He pulled down to Mrs. Keefe's Cafe down on Cherokee Street and parked. I sat there; and the more I thought about it, I knew it did have. My daddy came out; and I said, "That truck down there has a trap on it." So Frank Wellus (who was mayor pro tem of Marietta then) and my daddy got into the car, and John came running up. John said, "That truck ain't got no trap on it." Daddy said, "It won't hurt to see." We sat there and waited for him to finish his dinner, and he pulled off and went up Church Street. We pulled him over and stopped him. My daddy was talking to him and I looked underneath and saw that it had a false bottom in it. He said, "You got a trap in this thing? How much liquor have you got?" The man said, "Oh, hundred and five cases." Well he bought the truck back and paid the fine. Two weeks later, we were searching bootleggers on Bankhead Highway. It was right on the highway. I looked up, and there went the truck going toward Paulding County. He was going a different route. We ran and jumped in the car, but couldn't overtake him. We turned around and came back. He came right up in front of us headed back toward Atlanta. We pulled him over and stopped him. He said, "You got me again." He had another hundred and five cases. I have had a lot of experiences with whiskey.
- A You said that Cobb County was part of the Blue Ridge Circuit. Do you remember how many people were living in Cobb County then, or can you give me some information about what it was like back then?
- S Well, there couldn't have been too many people. I don't remember the count, but I think my daddy had four deputies back in those days. It was a big county, but we probably had 28,000 people.
- A What was the biggest shopping area back then?

S Square

A Square in Marietta?

S Square, yes.

A I guess Marietta was the biggest town?

S Oh, yes. Marietta was the largest town by far. Everybody came to Marietta. I know when we lived in the country, my daddy brought two bales of cotton to town. The square wasn't paved then; it was about ankle deep in mud. I got away from the wagon and got lost. Bill Bishop, who was sheriff himself prior to that, took me and sat me in front of the courthouse. I was a little boy and scared to death and Daddy came by there and got me. I wasn't used to coming to town, you know.

A Did you do any farming back then? Cotton farming?

S Daddy did. He did mostly vegetable farming. He would get up at two or three o'clock in the morning, and take his stuff in a wagon to Atlanta,

A How long would it take to go from here to Atlanta?

S Oh, it would take about three or four hours to go to Atlanta. He did leave about two or three o'clock in the morning, and he would get back late that afternoon.

A Was this prior to him being sheriff?

S Yes, prior to moving to Marietta here.

A Did he own his own land or did he sharecrop?

S My grandmother owned the land.

A I guess there was a lot of sharecropping going on back then, wasn't there?

S There was a lot of it, yes; but the land we farmed was what is Milford Elementary School now. I was born in a house across the street in an old house where the fire department is now.

A That's the southern part of the county. That area must have been all farms back then?

S Yes, it was all farms. Back in those days, Cobb County made about ten or twelve thousand bales of cotton a year. There was a good bit of cotton raised in Cobb County back in those days.

A What was another good crop for farmers back then?

S Well, produce was a good crop back in those days. Most of the people, if they farmed, raised cotton.

A Was there a cotton gin somewhere around here?

S Yes, right across the railroad in Marietta where the Marietta Recreation Hall is now.

A Everybody brought their cotton up to Marietta?

S Well, you had them all over the county. There was one there. There was one in Kennesaw; one in Smyrna; one in Powder Springs; one in Austell. You had them scattered all over the county.

A Where was the jail?

S Across Washington Avenue. That jail hasn't been torn down too long.

A How big a jail did they have?

S They had one that would house about thirty-five people. When we moved to the jail, they had the gallows there, and it was still working. My brother and I used to play with it. We would trip the thing just to see it fall. Of course, they later did away with it and cemented the door. Back in those days my mother was the cook, jailer, and everything else. They couldn't afford to pay us salary to hire one because they didn't make that much money. She had a lot of problems. She had the prisoners run over her twice.

A Trying to escape?

S Trying to escape. We had a cow. We milked that cow at the jail there, and we raised hogs and everything. My brother was milking one afternoon and heard my mother holler. He ran through the house and picked up the 20 gauge shotgun (which I still have). They were trying to open the door to get out. Of course, it wasn't loaded; but he told them if they tried to come out, he was going to shoot them. He was probably about fourteen years old. So they gave the keys back to my mother.

A I take it you had a house right there in the jail?

S Yes, we lived in the jail. We lived in the front and the jail was on the back side.

A Was the jail upstairs or downstairs?

- S Both. It was upstairs and downstairs. We had three cell blocks.
- A Well, did your daddy have his office in the jail?
- S No, it was in the courthouse. But when I took office, my office was in the jail. Nobody was living in the house part of it so my office was there.
- A Was this the same jail?
- S Yes.
- A When did they finally move your old jail over to the present jail?
- S Herb McCollum was County Commissioner, and he started the first project. Mr. Barrett has been in sixteen years, so it had to be around fourteen years ago.
- A What kind of prisoners did you have? Do you remember any big crimes or prisoners?
- S Oh, we had a good many homicides. But there was nobody electrocuted that I remember while my daddy was still in office. A lot of them got life sentences. Back in those days you would have an occasional burglary and a lot of chicken stealing. A lot of chicken stealing.
- A Were blacks and whites both involved in that usually?
- S Yes, black and whites were involved
- A You said 75 percent of your prisoners were blacks back then?
- S Yes.
- A Was it because they couldn't work?
- S Well, I don't know. I had rather not say about that.
- A What about communications back then? Did you have radios in your cars?
- S No, you would get in the car and go out. I remember so many nights me and my daddy would go out and sit on the road all night and catch two loads of whiskey. My daddy would tell my mother what road we would be on if anybody wanted us. They would have to send somebody out to get us.
- A So if somebody called the sheriff's office for a homicide or something like that, they would have to send somebody out to get you?

- S Of course. He had four deputies; and he would try to get in touch with one of them; but like it has always been, the people just wanted to see the sheriff. That is the way it is now. Bill Hutson (sheriff at this time)...everybody wants to talk to him. And nine times out of ten, most anybody in the office could give them the advice that he gives them. But they want to see the sheriff. That's the way it goes. That is an elective office.
- A Do you remember when the first radios came in or when you started getting radios?
- S No, we didn't have any. But when my father got defeated, the county police got radios in their cars. That's the first they had. After 1933, my brother and I ran a service station; and I worked for the Marietta Fire Department and went into the service November 25, 1940. But that year's training turned out to be about a five year training. I spent most of my tour in the service (17 months) down at Ft. Stewart and two years in Newfoundland.
- A What branch of service were you in?
- S I was in the antiaircraft.
- A This was World War II, you are talking about?
- S Yes, when my daddy was elected the second time in 1944, he ran against Babe Hicks; and it was so tangled up, the state of Georgia threw it out and made them run it over. In the meantime, Mr. Babe Hicks died; and Dewey Gable opposed my daddy, and my daddy beat him.
- A Do you remember your roughest campaign or who gave you a lot of trouble while you were running?
- S My chief deputy the first time I ran after about a year and a half made me a proposition I couldn't become involved in. I told him I couldn't do it. He said, "Well, I'm going to pull out and run against you." I said, "You will just have to pull out and run against me." Course, he politicked and politicked at the time. That was my first time in office. I had four opponents, and I got 3400 votes more than all the rest of them put together. Then I didn't have any opposition for a while. The last opposition I had was Joe Bullard, a Republican. I didn't do anything, and he didn't do anything. I beat him about 10,000 votes.
- A So you didn't actually campaign that last time?
- S No. Being in law enforcement while I served, I also worked for the State Revenue Department for a while. I worked in Paulding County where there were a lot of stills. We would raid as high as sixty stills a month. They were the groundhog type. They weren't big stills. I enjoyed that, and I

got a lot of exercise walking branches and stuff.

A Do you remember where your last still was that you got?

S The last still that was caught was about four years ago. It was on Roberts Road. It was a huge still. Two 3000 gallon stills. They were operating out of the basement of the house and had a lake in the back. They were pumping water from the lake to the house to cool it and condense it. It was putting out a gallon a minute. It was a huge still. We caught one and one got away.

A So they had it set up in the basement of the house there?

S Yes.

A I guess that was one of the last big operations?

S No, I think there is still a little whiskey being made. These people who put up big stills use disinfectant stuff; so if you don't get some information on them, they are hard to catch because they keep them clean.

A They do now?

S Yes.

A Where would be an ideal place to set one up? Would it be in a basement like that guy did?

S That is a good place. We caught a lot of them in basements from small ones to large ones. Biggest load of whiskey I ever caught was a truck with nine hundred and six gallons on it. I have got pictures of all these stills and things. I made pictures of all of them.

A Do you have a scrapbook around here with you?

S No, it's at home. I don't have a scrapbook; just a bunch of pictures. I know my daddy took me down on Hicks Road to a great still down there. Our information was that it was in the house. We could smell it in the house. It had been under there. The man's wife kept trying to get out while we were there. Finally she went out in the back yard and hollered, "It's a raid." They had an underground still. They had thirty-two vats and an upright boiler. He ran, and I ran after him. I ran him about a mile, I guess. He fell right in a field and said, "I'll be damn fellow, don't you ever give up?" Hardly anyone could outrun me back then.

A Did any of your brothers get into law enforcement?

S My brother was Chief of Police here for twenty-eight years,

- A Over at the city?
- S The city, yes.
- A I guess you worked pretty close together since you were the sheriff?
- S Yes, between my father, myself, and my brother, we had over a hundred years in law enforcement.
- A Do you have any other brothers besides the one who was Chief?
- S No other brothers, but two sisters. I've got one nephew who is a city policeman and has been for sixteen years.
- A Marietta Police?
- S Marietta Police Department
- A Law enforcement is in your family, isn't it?
- S Yes, but it is about played out. I enjoyed law enforcement. I used to enjoy it more than I do now. They have so many federal decisions reversing you this and that, it got to where it wasn't a pleasure to enforce the law. I personally think they went too far on some of the decisions, but that wasn't for me to say. That's one of the main reasons I gave it up. Under their decision, I had a lot of law suits against me. None of them materialized, but it was a terrible worry for the sheriff. The sheriff has a few of them now. You can't help but worry, and back then we didn't have any coverage to start off with. Later on I did through the national sheriff's association. Sheriff Hutson has himself and all the deputies covered under it. The false arrest insurance.
- A I guess when you first started, people didn't think about suing you. They just paid the fine.
- S Yes. That was it. They just wanted to get out the best way they could.
- A A lot of them I don't guess even showed back up for court or trial, did they? Especially the whiskey haulers?
- S No, the whiskey haulers always came in. They were usually fined a reasonable fine, especially during the Depression. A lot of them were put on suspended sentences and told not to come back before the judge at all. The judge was D.W. Blair (whose son was the mayor) back when my daddy was sheriff.

He used to go to Blue Ridge, Ellijay, Jasper, etc., and we would always take him up to the hotel early Monday morning. He would call up and tell us when to come pick him up. Usually it took three or four days for court. He went from town to town.

A They didn't have a court system like they have now?

S No. One judge covered the whole circuit district.

A Did you say the judge came here?

S Yes. Judge Blair lived here. Judge John Wood succeeded him, and he lived in Cherokee County. He was a great man.

A Do you remember when they changed the court system, and we got out of the Blue Ridge Circuit?

S I don't remember the year, no.

A Do you know who the first judge was here when we got out of the Blue Ridge Circuit?

S Harold Hawkins.

A Did they have court more often after that?

S Oh, yes.

A I guess the county started growing?

S The county started growing. Cherokee County and other counties. Course, they still have the Blue Ridge Circuit. It includes all the counties except Cobb County, Cherokee, Gilmer, Fannin, and Forsyth.

A You said you went to Marietta High School?

S One year, yes.

A Where did you go to grammar school?

S Waterman Street Elementary School. At the time I lived on Clay Street. We would cut across the pasture.

A It seems strange you talking about it being pasture, and now it's all grown up with business.

S Yes, I used to kill birds, squirrels, and rabbits while we lived down there.

A What about some of your experiences going to Atlanta. Did you ever go to Atlanta much when you were a boy?

S No, not too often. I was too busy trying to catch whiskey. Under the fee system, you had to work hard. It was hard to make a living. Course, when I got elected in 1956, I had eleven detectives and office help. Daughter of the former sheriff came to work for me. Her daddy beat my daddy. She stayed with me for 20 years. With the detective and office help, I had somewhere around thirty or thirty-five people. That is until I turned the detectives over to the county police.

A Do you remember when you turned the detectives over to the county police?

S I don't remember the year, but we didn't have enough help to do the job as sheriff and detective too. So I asked Ernest Barrett to take them over because I just could not work night and day. Jessie Cooper, Edward Brumbelow, and myself averaged eighty-four hours a week for eleven years. They took them over, and two years later they had sixty-four detectives.

A I don't guess you got paid overtime, did you?

S No. No overtime.

A You were putting in eighty-four hours a week and you were getting paid the same.

S I started as sheriff making \$8400 a year, I believe it was; and when I quit, I was making \$17,500 a year. It was hard picking, trying to get it up to there. Of course, at this time, Sheriff Hutson has got it up to about \$22,000. I guess it's worth it for all you have to put up with. Course, he has a lot of people under him. I had approximately 115 people when I left office. I guess he has got about 135 now. Course, the county is growing. It went from a one horse town to three hundred thousand people. I have worked for Sheriff Hutson as an aide. I think he has made an excellent sheriff for Cobb County.

A I would imagine you have seen a lot of change.

S Well, I guess I went through the biggest transition of anybody. I know while my daddy was city police and we were living on Clay Street, we had a hard time making ends meet. My mother and grandmother used to make me some short britches. I wore short britches until I was sixteen years old. My first long pair was one of those hand-me-down suits from my uncle. Course, we had plenty to eat, but not very much variety. We ate a lot of dried beans and a lot of corn bread.

A Good old butter beans and sweet milk. You say you went through the biggest transition. I guess that's true.

- S Yes, it was a one horse town. When I left it I had 115 people; so that is the biggest transition.
- A You went from no radios in your cars to . . .
- S Radios and now the system Sheriff Hutson has is even more modernized. And there will be changes again if they have to. You have to keep up with the times.
- A Back when you were sheriff, you said they formed a county police in Cobb County. They gave them radios. Did they eventually give you some radios to go in your cars?
- S They had radios in the car when my daddy got elected. It was after his first time; when he got re-elected, my daddy had one radio in one car.
- A Was he on the same frequency with the police department?
- S Yes.
- A What kind of duties did the sheriff have after the county police came in? Did they take over most of the roads?
- S They took over the traffic end. Back when my daddy was sheriff, the speed laws were thirty-five miles an hour. I have made a good many cases of people going forty and forty-five miles an hour. We had a lot of meanness come out of Atlanta back in those days. We would work the lower end of the county frequently at night. There were a lot of prostitutes who came out of there. Fulton County and Atlanta got after them pretty hard, and we caught a lot of prostitutes back in those days, which was also a way of making money on the fee system. He said it wasn't right. I never did do it, but some people would make cases where they could have let people go under the fee system.
- A Your daddy never liked the fee system?
- S Never liked the fee system. He was still under it when he died; but it changed after that, I believe, under the term of Sheriff Scroggins to a regular salary.
- A You said he died in office?
- S Yes, he had a heart attack on April 13, 1945. I came home and rushed him to the hospital, and he died there.
- A How many years did he have before his term would end?
- S Well, he had only served a year and three months. Mr. Scroggins was Chief Deputy, and under the law he took over the lapse of that term. Then he was reelected two terms. Then I defeated my daddy's chief deputy.

- A You were talking about prostitution. Was there a motel or something somewhere around here in Marietta?
- S No, they parked their cars, went in the woods, and so forth.
- A Would these guys go down there and pick them up?
- S Yes, and we got a lot of complaints from the citizens down there about cars parking. We worked there quite frequently, especially when the weather was warm. They weren't too bad when it was cold. Back in those days we didn't have many heaters in cars. I know many a night me and my daddy have gone out in an open car with curtains up in it with a lantern between our legs to keep warm to catch whiskey. Next morning we would be black with smoke.
- A You didn't have any heaters, so you used a lantern?
- S Yes, we took a lap robe and put the lantern down between our legs, we put the lap robe over us and kept warm too.
- A Were you the sheriff when the Bell Bomber plant came to Marietta?
- S No, I was gone in the service.
- A I would imagine that brought a lot of people to Cobb County.
- S Yes, it brought a lot of people here.
- A I asked you about a motel or hotel. Was there nowhere for people to stay around Marietta when they came to town?
- S Well, later on there was one down in Smyrna that was quite famous. My daddy took office in 1944-45. He raided down there and caught somewhere around twenty-five or thirty couples in there. There was a big write-up about it in those days.
- A How was Smyrna? Did they have a pretty big force back then?
- S No, they had a very small force.
- A Did Acworth and Kennesaw also have police departments?
- S Acworth did. I don't remember if Kennesaw did or not. Acworth has a pretty small police force. One or two people is about all. Trouble back in those days was paying the people salaries. City police here when my daddy got on made a dollar a day.
- A Doesn't seem like much, does it?
- S No, but he was glad to get it. Along with working there and part-time jobs, we lived. We didn't live fancy, but we had plenty to eat. We always raised hogs and cows.

- A Did you have a lot of people to come in to give you hogs or chickens or anything like that?
- S No, I don't remember anybody giving us anything.
- A Who was responsible for feeding the prisoners?
- S My daddy was responsible.
- A Was he? How would he get the food to feed them?
- S He bought it and charged it to the county. Course, back in those days, they were fed fatback, gravy, and dried beans. They lived on it, and I have lived on it myself. So they were no better than I was.
- A Yes, you were eating the same thing they were.
- S We were eating off the same table. There were different kitchens, but the same food. Back in those days you didn't have any complaints about the food much. Now they have three or four vegetables, meats, and stuff, and a balanced diet. The government requires you to feed them a balanced diet.
- A So, you are under the law to feed them a balanced diet whether you have the money or not?
- S Yes, and they do feed good meals in this jail over here. It's not like home, but I have picked up a lot of hardened criminals that say it is the best jail food they have ever eaten.
- A Yes, I have heard that before myself. Also, that it is a good jail here. Talking about jails, what is the biggest jailbreak you remember?
- S Three. At the old jail, if they got a hack saw, they could saw out in a few hours time. I came in one morning, I had a date. I went into the kitchen, and I heard something sawing. I went in and woke my daddy up and said, "They are sawing out upstairs." He and I went up there after he got his gun. They had already sawed out of the jail block and were sawing out of the window. It was a problem keeping people in jail back in those days because the windows were down so that anybody could put anything in jail they wanted to.
- A People would sneak things in there to help get them out?
- S Yes, we didn't have but about 25, sometimes 30 people, but that was a rare occasion. I would say the normal population would be 12 or 15.
- A Twelve or 15 prisoners?
- S Yes.

- A And you had four deputies to watch them and patrol the county?
- S The deputies didn't have anything to do with it. They worked out on the road mostly. My mother was the jailor. Later on after my daddy started making better money, he hired a cook to cook instead of Mother.
- A Did they have county commissioners back then when he was sheriff?
- S Yes.
- A Would they allot him so much money in a budget?
- S They gave him money in the budget, and that's all.
- A He had to make do with what he had.
- S Yes, had to make do with what they allotted him. Between the time he left office and was re-elected, he worked for the County Police for several years under J. Horace Hamby, County Commissioner.
- A This was after he was sheriff?
- S This was after he was sheriff the first time. My daddy liked stock, and he got into the mule business. He traded mules and made a good living out of trading mules. He loved the mule business. They had a place here in town and one in Acworth. A lot of mules were traded and sold back in those days.
- A People used them for farm animals, right?
- S Yes.
- A You were talking about trading mules. Would somebody's mule die or get old or what?
- S Well, mules would get old or they would not be satisfied with them. They were like they are about cars now. They would use them a while and want something different. Most of the farmers wanted good mules that would work. And my daddy would have a lot of mules shipped in here from Tennessee...good mules.
- A So if a farmer became dissatisfied with his mules, he would trade them out and get another set like he would a car?
- S Yes, and there was always somebody willing to buy them because they would be at a reduced price when they traded in, just like cars.
- A If a man didn't have a good set of mules back then, he was in trouble, I guess.

- S In trouble, yes, Course, some of the big farmers had eight or ten head of mules. Now this day and time tractors can do as much as thirty head of mules.
- A Did you ever do any tractor farming or machine farming?
- S No, just mules.
- A I imagine when people started trucking, farming became big business around here, didn't it?
- S Oh, yes. Some of the bigger farmers went into strictly produce farming like the Bullard boys out on Dallas Highway. They were strictly produce farmers. They used to raise cotton on the farm. They still raised some corn, but mostly they raised squash and peas. They had different crops all during the summer. They always took theirs into Atlanta.
- A Big market in Atlanta?
- S Big market there, yes.
- A Who was the biggest farmer you remember around here?
- S I don't know. I guess the Anderson farm was the biggest around here.
- A Was that located in the south part of the county?
- S That's located where they have all those fuel tanks down there near Powder Springs Road.
- A What was their main crop?
- S Well, corn, cotton, and they raised a lot of hay at that time. There was another big farm on Canton Road. That Anderson, I believe was the president of Bibb Manufacturing Company. He owned that one up there, and he had tenant farmers and overseers. Sharecroppers were up there.
- A What were some of the main roads you had back then when your father was sheriff and you were working for him?
- S Well, of course, when I was working for him, Canton Road wasn't even paved. Roswell Road wasn't paved.
- A What about 41 Highway? Was it a paved road?
- S Most of it was paved. Course it was a turtle back road.
- A Was that the main highway through here?

- S That was the main highway coming from the north. There wasn't a whole lot of tourists back in those days. I know my daddy bought my mother a T-model Ford, and she never would drive it. We went to Jacksonville, Florida, to see her uncle and aunt down there one time. It took us 3 days and 2 nights to get down there. It started using oil before we got down there. Mother kept up with all the expenses, and on the way back we were buying oil by the three gallons. We used sixteen gallons of oil in that T-model.
- A Now you can get there in five or six hours. I would imagine you did a lot of traveling while you were sheriff, especially later on up in the 60's and 70's didn't you?
- S Yes. While I was sheriff, I had the privilege to be in every state in the union picking up people or going through there to pick up people. Plus I went to London, England, to pick up one. Judge Luther Hames was solicitor general back then. They had twelve counts on this boy for forgery. They put in an extradition on him and extradited him. He and I went over there and spent four days there. About four FBI men showed us around town for four days. We had to lay over to get all the final papers fixed.
- A This was in London, England?
- S Yes, they took us on tours. We had the privilege of going through Scotland Yard and that's something anybody rarely gets to go through.
- A That's true. I would imagine that Scotland Yard is a fine outfit.
- S The barrister who represented us was real nice. He invited us to his club where he had his own table and one man waited on him only. He brought some wine out and poured it in the glasses; and our host kept saying, "Chill it just a little more. Chill it just a little more." It had to be just right with him. We had a wonderful meal. It was very unusual for one man to be waiting on you hand and foot and that's all he did. That one man waited on that one table.
- A Well, how did you get the prisoner back? Did you fly?
- S We flew him back.
- A Do you know what year this was?
- S It was in the early sixties, I guess. It was 1964 or 1965.
- A I bet that was an experience for you, wasn't it?

S Yes, it was an experience. I had never been there before, and I don't guess I will get a chance to get back. It was a trip well worth it. We stayed in a hotel that had wonderful food. People were real nice to us over there.

A Did you mostly transport by car in the United States?

S By car. I guess I made some twenty or twenty-five trips to California to pick up prisoners. I guess only three or four times I went out there that I flew them back.

A Have you been to Alaska to pick one up?

S No, that wasn't one of them. All the original 48 states.

A What did you do with the prisoner when you had to stop?

S We would board them up in the sheriff department or police department. They would keep them overnight.

A So when you came into a town you just took the prisoner to the local sheriff and he would board him for you?

S Yes.

A Did you have to pay for that service?

S No, most of them wouldn't charge. We told them not to feed them. We would feed them breakfast. I don't recall but one time--that was in Kentucky--they charged us.

A I guess you did the same for people who were traveling through here?

S Yes. Course, later on all the sheriffs in Georgia got together and decided there would be no charges. If we went to Tifton, Georgia, to pick up somebody, there would be no charges. Likewise, if they came up here, it was an understanding that there would be no charges.

A That cut down on the expenses a lot, didn't it?

S Yes, it cut down on the expenses.

A Thank you.