

Karen Ferguson: —telling me where you grew up and a little bit about the people you grew up with? Okay.

Andrew Strong: Want me to tell you now?

Karen Ferguson: Yeah. Sure, sure.

Andrew Strong: Name is Andrew Strong.

Karen Ferguson: Right, okay. Mm-hmm.

Andrew Strong: I grew up in Pitt County.

Karen Ferguson: In Pitt County, okay.

Andrew Strong: Mm-hmm, on a place called Ayden, North Carolina.

Karen Ferguson: Ayden, North Carolina?

Andrew Strong: That was the closest town I was to, yep.

Karen Ferguson: How far away was Ayden from the place you grew up?

Andrew Strong: About six miles.

Karen Ferguson: Six miles, six miles.

Andrew Strong: Mm-hmm.

Karen Ferguson: What did your family do for a living?

Andrew Strong: Farmed.

Karen Ferguson: Farmed?

Andrew Strong: Mm-hmm.

Karen Ferguson: Did they have their own place, or were they working on somebody else's land?

Andrew Strong: Well, to start with, it was working on somebody else's land, but where I grew up at, they had

a border farm.

Karen Ferguson: Sorry. A border farm? Okay.

Andrew Strong: Mm-hmm, yeah.

Karen Ferguson: Now what does that mean? What does a border farm mean?

Andrew Strong: Hmm?

Karen Ferguson: What does that mean?

Andrew Strong: That's what they tend the land. Tending tobacco, corn, potatoes. Stuff like that.

Karen Ferguson: Okay, okay, all right and who did you grow up with?

Andrew Strong: Who, the people?

Karen Ferguson: Yeah, your family.

Andrew Strong: Taylor Strong.

Karen Ferguson: Okay. Taylor Strong. But who in your family did you grow up with?

Andrew Strong: Hmm?

Karen Ferguson: Did you grow up with your mother and father?

Andrew Strong: Yeah.

Karen Ferguson: Yeah and how many kids were in the family?

Andrew Strong: How many kids?

Karen Ferguson: Mm-hmm.

Andrew Strong: Well I was the youngest. Yeah. Yeah, my granddaddy raised me and I grew up with the older children, which was Ayden Strong, Clay Strong and Amonetta Strong and Abby Strong and the oldest one named Lula Strong.

Karen Ferguson: Lula, okay.

Andrew Strong: Yep.

Karen Ferguson: So did you know your parents?

Andrew Strong: Mm-hmm.

Karen Ferguson: Where were they?

Andrew Strong: I'm telling you now.

Karen Ferguson: Okay. I'm sorry.

Andrew Strong: Mm-hmm. Taylor Strong.

Karen Ferguson: Okay. So everybody lived on your grandfather's farm. Is that right?

Andrew Strong: Mm-hmm, yeah. Yeah, we were all raised there.

Karen Ferguson: Okay. Did they own this land, on the farm, this farm?

Andrew Strong: Yeah.

Karen Ferguson: Okay. Were there a lot of Black landowners in Pitt County?

Andrew Strong: Hmm?

Karen Ferguson: Were there many Black landowners in Pitt County?

Andrew Strong: No, no.

Karen Ferguson: Okay. So what did most people do?

Andrew Strong: They rented land.

Karen Ferguson: Rented, okay.

Andrew Strong: Not a whole lot of them now.

Karen Ferguson: Mm-hmm.

Andrew Strong: Things were kind of tight back then. You know what I'm saying?

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Andrew Strong: See, I was born in 1897.

Karen Ferguson: So you're—

Andrew Strong: I'm about 64 years old.

Karen Ferguson: You're 94?

Andrew Strong: Yeah.

Karen Ferguson: 94 years old.

Andrew Strong: Mm-hmm, yeah. Born in 1897.

Karen Ferguson: 1897, okay.

Andrew Strong: Groundhog Day.

Karen Ferguson: Groundhog Day, okay.

Andrew Strong: Yeah.

Karen Ferguson: So March—

Andrew Strong: Hmm?

Karen Ferguson: March 27th. What is Groundhog Day?

Andrew Strong: It's April, I mean, February 7th you know is Groundhog Day.

Karen Ferguson: February, okay. Okay.

Andrew Strong: Groundhog Day.

Karen Ferguson: Right, okay. Now do you know anything about your grandparents?

Andrew Strong: Yeah, told you he raised me.

Karen Ferguson: Okay. Yeah, where did they come from? Do you know anything about their history?

Andrew Strong: Oh well—that's going to be in a paper, you're going to put that down there on the paper?

Karen Ferguson: Well it's all coming out on the tape. We're picking up your voice.

Andrew Strong: What are you going to do with it then?

Karen Ferguson: Well it's going [INTERRUPTION 00:04:20]—so you were talking about the things that you grew on the farm. What kinds of things again were you, you grew tobacco?

Andrew Strong: Yeah.

Karen Ferguson: And what else?

Andrew Strong: I raised a little cotton.

Karen Ferguson: Cotton?

Andrew Strong: Yeah, raised a little cotton, but I didn't like cotton. I wasn't no cotton picker.

Karen Ferguson: Why was that? Why didn't you like cotton?

Andrew Strong: I just didn't like it. You get down there and bend your back. I just didn't like it. My back would hurt. The old folks would whip me. I didn't like that. [indistinct 00:05:03] up and grown I wouldn't go out and pick it.

Karen Ferguson: Right, so you refused to pick it after you got grown?

Andrew Strong: Yeah, I'm quick. After I was up and grown. I tended tobacco and corn, [indistinct 00:05:16]. Sweet potatoes and all like that.

Karen Ferguson: Now the sweet potatoes, did you sell those, or did you keep them to eat yourself?

Andrew Strong: Well, I did sell a few, after I got grown. I had a tater house and I had a thermometer to hang up there to tell how much heat is. Just so we didn't let it get below 35, they would keep all right. But you could get them up in the 50s, but that's too high of heat. You just want it so they wouldn't freeze and if it turned cold, sure enough I'd go out there and light the heater, so to keep them warm. Yeah, that's the way I regularly done them.

Karen Ferguson: Now, when you said you had, you built yourself a sweet potato house when you got grown and you were on your own place? Is that right?

Andrew Strong: Yeah.

Karen Ferguson: What did you do when you were a boy and you were living on your grandfather's farm?

Andrew Strong: Well, I had to do what he said to do.

Karen Ferguson: Right. Well no, but what did you do with the sweet potatoes then?

Andrew Strong: Huh?

Karen Ferguson: What did you do with the sweet potatoes?

Andrew Strong: We ate them.

Karen Ferguson: Oh you ate them? But did you have a house for them?

Andrew Strong: Yeah, yeah.

Karen Ferguson: You had a house there too.

Andrew Strong: Yeah. I sold a few of them after I was about grown and got big enough to do my own business. I raised them and dig them out, before they would bruise them. [indistinct 00:06:59] and skin them up. Actually, I raised them and put the slips in there. You had to put the small taters in there and dig them over and then the spring come. The bed about last til March and April. May, you go to setting them out again and start a new crop for next year. That's the way we raised the taters.

Karen Ferguson: Right. Now did your grandfather raise a lot of cotton?

Andrew Strong: No.

Karen Ferguson: No?

Andrew Strong: No. He didn't raise much cotton. Think about it, he didn't do much farming no how.

Karen Ferguson: He didn't?

Andrew Strong: No. He didn't know how to farm. He was old-timing slave.

Karen Ferguson: Right, oh okay, okay.

Andrew Strong: He was brought up from South Carolina, I believe, as a slave up in a place called Greene County, on the other side of Ayden and they had to work for old master. They stayed a slave a long time. Then whatever they said to do, had it good with the land, [indistinct 00:08:32] and treat yourself to that. He

was a part Indian.

Karen Ferguson: He was, okay.

Andrew Strong: Yeah.

Karen Ferguson: Well did he tell you what tribe?

Andrew Strong: No.

Karen Ferguson: No?

Andrew Strong: I don't know what he was. All I know, he was Indian. His hair, he could, I ain't never seen him wash his face and he'd break the ice and wash his head I never seen it, he'd break that ice and wash his head and he'd comb that hair back, kind of stiff black hair and it'd lay like that all day long. Yeah, he was part Indian. He was brought up as a slave. See they [indistinct 00:09:23] way back yonder and turn around and sell him, to a place yonder Federal. You ever hear of Federal?

Karen Ferguson: The Federal? Is this during the Civil War?

Andrew Strong: Mm-mm.

Karen Ferguson: Oh okay. No, what is that?

Andrew Strong: I'm talking about a place, a town.

Karen Ferguson: Oh okay. Oh okay.

Andrew Strong: Called Federal.

Karen Ferguson: Called Federal, okay. Is this in South Carolina, or North Carolina?

Andrew Strong: Right on the edge.

Karen Ferguson: Okay, mm-hmm. Okay and what would they do there?

Andrew Strong: Hmm?

Karen Ferguson: What happened there in Federal?

Andrew Strong: They worked them. They had to go out to the land and plow it up. Great big fields. Take a [indistinct 00:10:26] barn—[indistinct 00:10:26] barns and then they had to go in there and [indistinct

00:10:26] and that was the bad part about it and they treated the women just like [indistinct 00:10:32] dog and put a man right in the bed with them and they'd never seen them. That's the way they done them.

Karen Ferguson: So that's what he did in slavery?

Andrew Strong: Mm-hmm. Yeah, yeah. That's what he did in slavery. Yeah, they'd put them right in there, bring them in at 1:00 at night and put them right in the bed with a woman and he doesn't know who he's getting in there with. [indistinct 00:10:55], is what he told me. Yeah. That's the way they done it. Some of them beat them. That's what he said. Didn't do their job, they told him they would beat him. That's what he said, way back yonder. I don't know. Of course, I don't know nothing about it. I'm just going with what they said they did. Yeah. What they do for them.

Karen Ferguson: Now was your grandmother, do you know anything about your grandmother?

Andrew Strong: Mm-hmm.

Karen Ferguson: Was she in slavery as well?

Andrew Strong: Yeah, all of them in slavery.

Karen Ferguson: Right, right. Did she tell you any stories about that?

Andrew Strong: Hmm?

Karen Ferguson: Did she tell you any stories about that?

Andrew Strong: No.

Karen Ferguson: No?

Andrew Strong: No. Probably [indistinct 00:11:39] anybody else.

Karen Ferguson: Your father, uh-huh.

Andrew Strong: Yeah.

Karen Ferguson: What did he tell you?

Andrew Strong: I'm just telling you what he told me.

Karen Ferguson: Okay, so this was your grandfather. Okay.



Andrew Strong: Yeah.

Karen Ferguson: All right. Now you said your grandfather wasn't a very good farmer. He didn't know anything about farming.

Andrew Strong: No, uh-uh.

Karen Ferguson: So what did he do for a living?

Andrew Strong: Well, he farmed.

Karen Ferguson: He farmed, but he didn't know—

Andrew Strong: Yeah, cotton and corn. When I was young. Yeah, cotton and corn, but really, he won't much of a, didn't know how to farm like I did. Whole lot of things he done it, I wouldn't have done it.

Karen Ferguson: Mm-hmm. What kinds of things?

Andrew Strong: Well, farming.

Karen Ferguson: Okay. Now but what kinds of things did he do that weren't—

Andrew Strong: Well, he rose too much for one thing and he [indistinct 00:12:40] corn [indistinct 00:12:40] and I wouldn't have done that. What you didn't do it [indistinct 00:12:43] farming. Corn kept hitting him in the face. He went right on farming. Yeah. They'd get out to the ends, the roots would be on the pile and he'd have to take them over and turn around and go back again. I didn't do that. My corn [indistinct 00:13:06]. But he didn't know how.

Karen Ferguson: So how did you learn how to do these things properly?

Andrew Strong: Well, I just looked at it. I had the sense to look at what he was doing wrong. What I had, I looked and seen what was wrong. See, he was plowing too much. Worked too hard. You know if you got corn hitting in you in the face, the rows big enough and deep rows here. Yeah, I just looked at it and it would be too long. Yeah.

Karen Ferguson: Now you said he owned his own land? Is that right?

Andrew Strong: Hmm?

Karen Ferguson: Did he own his own farm?

Andrew Strong: Yeah, when I was growing up, he did.

Karen Ferguson: Do you know how he got to owning it?

Andrew Strong: Yeah, bought it.

Karen Ferguson: How did he buy it? Did he save money?

Andrew Strong: Bought it from somebody else. White folks. That's the way I bought mine. Yeah, I bought mine from a man I farmed with, for about seven years and he sold me a farm. I own it now. That's the way you had to get land. Won't many people able to go right out and get land. They had to plow it out and that's a job. Yeah. Yeah, I bought mine. I say about three miles from here. [indistinct 00:14:38] Highway.

Karen Ferguson: Now, when you were growing up, when did you start working in the fields?

Andrew Strong: Oh, when I was right young. Right young, started then. Yeah, right young. Started then. Got a many whipping, picking cotton. [indistinct 00:15:02], until I was up and grown and I didn't have to pick it. Yeah. [indistinct 00:15:12] that job. Not easy. No, I ain't going to pick no cotton.

Karen Ferguson: Was there anybody in your family who was a good cotton picker?

Andrew Strong: No.

Karen Ferguson: No? Uh-uh.

Andrew Strong: No.

Karen Ferguson: No.

Andrew Strong: Mama could pick cotton right well, but they was old. They could do right well, but I couldn't pick it.

Karen Ferguson: Uh-huh. Yeah. What job did you like to do on the farm? What was the better crop for you?

Andrew Strong: Oh I tended tobacco and corn. [indistinct 00:15:44] and peas. Garden. I'd garden. I always had a garden and then I had a lot of sweet potatoes, was the biggest thing I had. I did cane a few years. You know cane, you know what it makes? Molasses comes out of that. I used to tend that. The biggest thing I tend. [indistinct 00:16:20] I tended them. That's about all I tended.

Karen Ferguson: Do you remember any, did you work with mules?

Andrew Strong: Hmm?

Karen Ferguson: Did you work with mules?

Andrew Strong: Yeah.

Karen Ferguson: Yeah?

Andrew Strong: Yeah.

Karen Ferguson: What made a good mule?

Andrew Strong: Hmm?

Karen Ferguson: What made a good mule?

Andrew Strong: What?

Karen Ferguson: What made a good mule?

Andrew Strong: [indistinct 00:16:40]?

Karen Ferguson: Or what, how was—let me think of how to—how would you know you had a good mule? What would a good mule do?

Andrew Strong: Had to work them before I could find out.

Karen Ferguson: Yeah. Do you remember any good mules you had?

Andrew Strong: Yeah, I had good mules.

Karen Ferguson: Why was it good?

Andrew Strong: Yeah, her name was Little Kate.

Karen Ferguson: Little Kate?

Andrew Strong: Yeah, yeah. A good mule. Yeah, that was as good a mule ever I owned.

Karen Ferguson: Why was she good?

Andrew Strong: Because, she'd do what I tell her. Just she was a good mule. Some of them ain't nothing. Some of them all right. I had one that died. He won't nothing, but this mule, I kept her and she got so old she couldn't even eat corn hardly. She do me just as good as anything. Somebody else get [indistinct 00:17:50]

and she didn't like them and she'd go just as hard as she could. No, she was a good mule. Yep.

Karen Ferguson: Yeah. Now in Pitt County, were there a lot of White farmers?

Andrew Strong: Yeah.

Karen Ferguson: Yeah?

Andrew Strong: Many farmers in Pitt County. One of the best states, one of the best places you could farm at was Pitt County. Better land up there than [indistinct 00:18:16] the land. Now this land down here is good land. But there's more good land in Pitt County than in Craven County. Regular farming place there. Yep.

Karen Ferguson: Now, can you tell me a little bit about the people you grew up around? Were there other people living close by—

Andrew Strong: Oh yeah, we went to school with them. Yeah, went to school with them.

Karen Ferguson: What would you do with your friends?

Andrew Strong: Hmm?

Karen Ferguson: What would you do with your friends?

Andrew Strong: Played.

Karen Ferguson: What would you play?

Andrew Strong: Well, we went out there and played and see we'd have recess. Yeah, 12:00 we'd have recess and then we'd eat and [indistinct 00:19:14]. Then we'd go back in the school and turn out about 4:00 and then we'd go home. But a big difference, we had to walk.

Karen Ferguson: You had to walk home.

Andrew Strong: We had to walk home. Now, these children got it gravy. They ride. There wasn't no riding there.

Karen Ferguson: How far away was your school from [indistinct 00:19:37]—

Andrew Strong: Well different. Now I didn't have quite a walk. Some of them had two or three miles to walk. [indistinct 00:19:45] back there then. Maybe it wasn't so many maybe had to walk a long way. A lot of them walked a long way. I didn't have to, I was lucky enough I didn't have quite a walk. Go to snowing and teacher turn you out and have you go home. We had it rough. These children back there, there wasn't no such thing

as riding way back then. 100 years ago. [indistinct 00:20:19] quite 100, but I'm 96. I know all about it.

Karen Ferguson: Right, right, right. Now how many rooms did your school have?

Andrew Strong: One.

Karen Ferguson: One room? And how many grades?

Andrew Strong: We didn't have no grades.

Karen Ferguson: Oh, you didn't?

Andrew Strong: No. No, there weren't no grades. We didn't know what a grade was. It was different than what it is now. No, we didn't know what no grades was. Old teacher call and come in there and read your lesson, [indistinct 00:21:01] put in that day and that was it.

Karen Ferguson: Right, right. Did you like school?

Andrew Strong: Yeah, I liked it all right.

Karen Ferguson: What did you like about it?

Andrew Strong: Well, I was trying to learn something. We had a rough time learning it, but it'd take the teachers back there and the way they done, they didn't go to none of these colleges, or nothing like that. There won't none for them to go. They'd go to school til they get grown and then they'd turn around and go to teaching you and didn't know nothing to teach you. That was tough. They didn't know nothing to teach you. After I was about grown, I learned what I learned after I about grown and gotten married a lot of it. I learned, I'd get a teacher every now and then that was a good teacher and that would boost me up a little. One teacher would come, I don't know how she come, but I loved arithmetic, what we called it, that was figuring.

Karen Ferguson: Sorry, the what?

Andrew Strong: Arithmetic.

Karen Ferguson: Oh, okay. Right. Okay, you liked that?

Andrew Strong: Yeah, I liked that. She learned me how to work—you ever hear of fractions?

Karen Ferguson: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm, yep.

Andrew Strong: She learned me that and I loved it and that's what hooked me. Then I turned right around,

maybe next year, that same teacher be right back and turn you to the first of the book. Can't learn nothing like that.

Karen Ferguson: Right. So you go right back to the beginning again?

Andrew Strong: Yeah. But I kept on going. Then the man favored the White man, about I don't know how long and he learned me a whole lot.

Karen Ferguson: He did?

Andrew Strong: Yeah.

Karen Ferguson: Now who was he?

Andrew Strong: A White man. Phinny Wayne. Mr. Phinny. I knowed him all my days. He learned me a whole lot.

Karen Ferguson: Now why did he help you? Why do you think he did that? Why did he help you learn?

Andrew Strong: Well, he learned me how to measure the land. [indistinct 00:23:36].

Karen Ferguson: Right. Was this someone you were working for?

Andrew Strong: Yeah, I farmed with him and then I raised [indistinct 00:23:45], where I was raised at, all he had to do was cross the road and be right in your yard. So if I was [indistinct 00:24:01], I could go there and tell Mr. [indistinct 00:24:01] give me a biscuit. They was good people. All of them just good people. We stayed in a place that they didn't try and mistreat you or nothing. They treat you just like a human being. Yeah.

Karen Ferguson: Were there ever people that you worked for who didn't treat you like a human being?

Andrew Strong: Oh, all I worked for treated me all right. But I said they didn't, they would act nothing like that. No, all I worked for. I've stayed in places with White folks just as good to me as [indistinct 00:24:40]. Yeah, they was.

Karen Ferguson: Did you know of people though who were mistreated by White people?

Andrew Strong: No.

Karen Ferguson: No?

Andrew Strong: We stayed in sections that treated you all right. That was after Negroes got free. They was

slaves at one time, I just told you. That was after we got free, when that happened.

Karen Ferguson: Now were there White sharecroppers and tenants in Pitt County?

Andrew Strong: Yeah, there were some. Yeah. Not all of them didn't own land. No, there was some poor just like I was. Yeah, they ran the land.

Karen Ferguson: Now when you, going back to school a little bit, were you able to go to school every day, or were you—

Andrew Strong: Yeah.

Karen Ferguson: Did you have to go work in the fields sometimes?

Andrew Strong: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. We went every day.

Karen Ferguson: Okay. So you never were held back to stay and work on the fields?

Andrew Strong: Mm-mm.

Karen Ferguson: No?

Andrew Strong: No.

Karen Ferguson: How long did school last during the year?

Andrew Strong: Oh, Lord it's been so long. Let's see. Well, about four months, I reckon.

Karen Ferguson: Four months?

Andrew Strong: It's been so long. It was some of them that were longer than others.

Karen Ferguson: Some schools?

Andrew Strong: Some of us went longer than others. But I don't know if it was five months, four months, now what, it's been so long. But some of the children had to stay home and pick cotton and I didn't have to do that as far as that goes. Been so long, woman, I don't know how it worked out now.

Karen Ferguson: Was school important to your parents?

Andrew Strong: Hmm?

Karen Ferguson: Was education important to your parents?

Andrew Strong: Yeah, they wanted us to learn something.

Karen Ferguson: Had they gotten any learning themselves?

Andrew Strong: No.

Karen Ferguson: No, okay.

Andrew Strong: No, no learning. I told you, they were slaves. The one that raised me. Some couldn't learn nothing. Some could. Some just couldn't learn nothing.

Karen Ferguson: Where did your teachers come from? Did they come from around—

Andrew Strong: Yeah.

Karen Ferguson: Were they from Pitt County?

Andrew Strong: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah. Come from right around, I knew them.

Karen Ferguson: Oh, so you knew them?

Andrew Strong: Known them. Known where they stayed at, as far as that go. Every now and then, you get a teacher come from [indistinct 00:27:37]. But some of them, I knowed them. They quit going to school there and go right to teaching me. I mean, they go to teaching right there.

Karen Ferguson: Right, right. Now the people who had to stay home from school, do you know why they had to do that?

Andrew Strong: Yeah.

Karen Ferguson: Why? They had to work in the cotton?

Andrew Strong: Yeah.

Karen Ferguson: Yeah, but who was telling them to do that, do you think? Was it different—

Andrew Strong: Their mother and father. Their daddy, [indistinct 00:28:15]. Yeah, some of them had to stay home. Had to stay there and work.

Karen Ferguson: Did you go to church when you were a child? Yeah?



Andrew Strong: Oh yeah.

Karen Ferguson: Where did you go to church?

Andrew Strong: Right there at home. The church won't far from where I was raised at, yeah.

Karen Ferguson: What was it called?

Andrew Strong: Huh?

Karen Ferguson: What was the church called?

Andrew Strong: Solomon Chapel. The church is Methodist. AME Zion, Methodist. Belong to Ayden right now. Go there the 2nd and 4th Sunday.

Karen Ferguson: Was church important?

Andrew Strong: Yeah. It is to me.

Karen Ferguson: Right. Why?

Andrew Strong: Well, I'm trying to be saved, when I come down to die. Doubt that. My day is getting short. You get 96 years old. I ain't got many more. No, that I ain't. I'll be 97 if I live to see 7th of February. Ain't many that old. No, that ain't. I know all the children not raised up to be, went to school. They ain't nary one living. No, but I take it back. I got a cousin living and I got two, [indistinct 00:30:18] and Mary. I have a sister. [indistinct 00:30:28] that I went to school and played with, is all gone but me. [indistinct 00:30:31], but Mary.

Karen Ferguson: Now when you went to church, what did you do there at church, other than the service? Were you involved in anything else?

Andrew Strong: No.

Karen Ferguson: No?

Andrew Strong: Just went to service. Went to service and take up collections. They want you to pay the preacher. That's all that we done. We'd have quarterly meetings, we'd call it. We'd have quarterly meetings in September, 2nd Sunday in September.

Karen Ferguson: What would happen at the meeting?

Andrew Strong: Hmm?

Karen Ferguson: What would happen at meeting?

Andrew Strong: At that meeting?

Karen Ferguson: Mm-hmm.

Andrew Strong: Well they'd preach.

Karen Ferguson: Oh okay. But how was it different than other Sundays?

Andrew Strong: Huh? Oh you didn't have no service that Sunday. No, we didn't have no, I moved two Sundays to the month. I hardly ever go to the other church. No, yeah. See we don't have, there ain't enough people to have no service every Sunday.

Karen Ferguson: Have you gone to church all through your life? Have you gone regularly all through your life to church?

Andrew Strong: Huh?

Karen Ferguson: Have you gone to church all through your life?

Andrew Strong: Yeah, I mean all my life. I've been going all my days. But I just show you, we don't have church but two Sundays. But the church is small and members is small. No, the church was always, it was a big church. But the members there, I think we got about 10 head of members. They died out. We ain't getting no young ones. Yeah, it did have a right good crowd at one time, but they all died out and died out and died out. [indistinct 00:32:55].

Karen Ferguson: Could you describe the house that you grew up in?

Andrew Strong: Oh, woman. Oh. Oh wow. Way back yonder. It won't no fine house, as much as it was [indistinct 00:33:17]. The one I grewed up in was an old house. It didn't have no weatherboarding—

Karen Ferguson: No weatherboarding.

Andrew Strong: Around it. Nothing like that. Like my house. My house probably got air conditioning, heat. Turn that heat on and warm the house right up. But nobody had nothing, do nothing like that then. They [indistinct 00:33:49] 500 pound bale of cotton [indistinct 00:33:54]. Way back there then, houses was old. That they was. Big difference than what it is now. No, my house is air-conditioned. Got [indistinct 00:34:17] oil in it, to keep it warm. All they do is just go down and turn the switch. The heater come on, go to heating the house up.

Karen Ferguson: How did you heat your house when you were a boy?

Andrew Strong: Kept some wood and [indistinct 00:34:34] wood and had a chimney. Yeah. Put the wood in and plenty [indistinct 00:34:44] back there then. You won't find that now. Go and cut wood and set up that chimney. You know a house is old, leaves be burning up. Get back it'd be cold. Yeah. That's the difference. Yeah.

Karen Ferguson: How about in the summer, when it was hot? How did you stay cool?

Andrew Strong: Oh well, there won't no cool. You got there in the sun and go to work. [indistinct 00:35:23] hole. Yeah. Stand in it and cool my feet. Then you ever seen [indistinct 00:35:32]?

Karen Ferguson: Sorry? A what?

Andrew Strong: You ever seen anybody prime tobacco?

Karen Ferguson: No. You can tell me about that.

Andrew Strong: Lord. It's a hard job.

Karen Ferguson: So what now, tell me about priming tobacco. How do you do it?

Andrew Strong: You ever seen it in a row?

Karen Ferguson: I know what it looks like, yeah.

Andrew Strong: Well, you chop it out and when it get ripe enough, you go out there and go to priming it and put it in the truck. Bring it to the shelter and drive under and the women go out there and they were what we called horses and put a stick on your horse, we called them. Then they'd go out there and they'd grab it, you ain't never seen it?

Karen Ferguson: I've heard people talking about it before, but I've never seen it.

Andrew Strong: Well the stick is about four foot and a half long. You tie it, lay it down and you get what you want in there, right, for that time. Now we always had [indistinct 00:37:04] and hang it on there, sticks on there [indistinct 00:37:08] and hang it up in the barn and the heat, the flues, you had the furnace, we called it that the furnace runs this way and no, furnace, let me get it right. The furnace run this way and sticks run this direction. When you hang them in there and you get your barn as full as you want it, then you put your heat in there and run your furnace, you run this way and you run your wood in there and they'd fill it out about five days.

Andrew Strong: Get it ready for another barn and fill it out and [indistinct 00:38:24] Friday. On a Friday night,

then we'd go to open the door and let the air out and then you go there and take it out, Monday morning. That Sunday always took it out and put it in the pack house, we called it, the building. Then we'd go back Monday morning and start again. Keep on [indistinct 00:38:54], get it all pulled off the stalk. Take about five weeks. You get it off the stalk and then you cut your stalk down. That was it, right there for the market. I always carried mine to Greenville. I won't staying down here. [indistinct 00:39:16] where I sold all my tobacco at. No I didn't. I got it wrong. I farmed here seven years. Now well anyhow, I sold all my tobacco to Greenville, North Carolina. There won't no market down here.

Karen Ferguson: Now when you went to market, did you get the same price for your tobacco as a White farmer did?

Andrew Strong: Yeah, well we got about the same price. [indistinct 00:39:46] got a good price and if you didn't, well that was a different story. I know I stayed here with a man, yeah, I farmed here. I had 10 acres in tobacco and the other 10 I had, 15 and somewhere I sold the highest tobacco there was on the market. [indistinct 00:40:25] try to get me to tend some Virginia Brightleaf. I wouldn't do it. I told him I didn't know nothing about it. The other man, he didn't say nothing. But I told him I didn't know nothing about it, [indistinct 00:40:52], no, no, no, no, no, no. What I said about went with him. He was the boss, but he didn't go against me. That man, my tobacco would go about 50 cents a pound [indistinct 00:41:05] just as red as it could be, he sold it for 10 cents a pound.

Karen Ferguson: 10 cents. Now, you sold yours for 50 cents, right and now this was the other tenant, or the owner, the White owner of the farm? It was the White man?

Andrew Strong: Yeah, the one that didn't sell it but for 10 cents.

Karen Ferguson: Okay. He sold it for 10 cents?

Andrew Strong: Yeah. [indistinct 00:41:36]. No, he wouldn't go against me and what I said. He didn't bother me.

Karen Ferguson: Right, right. So you sold your own tobacco?

Andrew Strong: Hmm?

Karen Ferguson: You sold your own tobacco?

Andrew Strong: No, that was for the boss man.

Karen Ferguson: Oh okay. I see. So he gave you 50 cents—

Andrew Strong: No, no. To the warehouse. Auctioneers did it all. See, they put it out on the row. A great long row. Some of them as long as, over here, they be long as, see that building yonder?

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Andrew Strong: It'd be a great big warehouse. You'd put that on the floor in rows and then the auctioneer and the barter come along and bid [indistinct 00:42:20]. That's the way tobacco was sold.

Karen Ferguson: So the other tenant who only got 10 cents, should he have gotten 50 cents?

Andrew Strong: Well, if he had tended tobacco like I did, he would.

Karen Ferguson: Okay. So yours was higher quality?

Andrew Strong: Yeah, mine was better tobacco than his was.

Karen Ferguson: Right. Now when people were working on the fields in tobacco, or cotton, or doing some of these other things, priming. How did they pass the time? Did they talk to each other? Or did they tell each other stories? Or sing, or what did they do?

Andrew Strong: They worked hard as they could.

Karen Ferguson: Right. So you didn't talk while you were working?

Andrew Strong: It was as hot as I don't know who. No, you stayed out there and worked. You didn't have time to talk. Actually, went out there and worked. [indistinct 00:43:15] and honest truth. I had to dig a hole to stand in to cool my feet off. Won't such a thing as [indistinct 00:43:23] back there then. Buying shoes. You went barefooted, you worked.

Karen Ferguson: Yeah. Did you ever have shoes?

Andrew Strong: Hmm?

Karen Ferguson: Did you ever wear shoes?

Andrew Strong: Yeah, I wore shoes in the wintertime.

Karen Ferguson: In the wintertime?

Andrew Strong: Yeah. Of course, I wear them year round now. No, you weren't wearing no shoes back there then. Never did.

Karen Ferguson: Do you remember any really hard times when there wasn't enough, when things were tight, really tight for your family?

Andrew Strong: Yeah, hard times?

Karen Ferguson: Mm-hmm.

Andrew Strong: Yeah. Yeah. 19 and, of course you don't know nothing about that.

Karen Ferguson: When was it?

Andrew Strong: 1933. Them was the roughest years I ever seen in my life.

Karen Ferguson: Right. What happened then?

Andrew Strong: Well the Hoover time we called it. President Hoover. He tight as I don't know who. Man furnished me 8 dollars a month. You buy food and I had some meat and stuff, but that's what I traded on. That year—I think 1933. I don't think we—I don't think I've got that year about, it's been so long, I've forgot. But I know he furnished me 8 dollars a month to buy groceries. A man come down here from [indistinct 00:45:38] and you could buy fish [indistinct 00:45:54] six cent a pound and he was standing around and of course I stayed right down the road there.

Andrew Strong: And he brought fish around and six cent a pound. I was standing around a little later and get them for five cent a pound and he wouldn't sell out, then he'd go sell them cheap. I could get meat [indistinct 00:46:16]. It was kind of get the scraps of meat. It was all right and that was what I fed my family, the meat, [indistinct 00:46:29]. So that's where I made it. I stayed here. Stayed there seven years, on this farm.