

Furman & Polly Matheson

2006 interview (edited)

TRANSCRIPT

Speaker abbreviations

FM: Furman Matheson

PM: Polly Matheson

IN1: Interviewer #1 (female)

IN2: Interviewer #2 (male)

FM: My daddy was a farmer. He, uh, raised, you know, whatever you can raise on a farm. And he owned a orchard, and he was into that, and a grocery store and filling station with his daddy, and the post office. He ran the post office a good while, and I was his assistant after his daddy got out and he took over, and I was his assistant.

IN1: Now what kind of work did you do here in Oconee County?

FM: Well, most of the time, I worked with my dad. I just helped him.

IN1: Now was that in the orchards?

FM: It was in the orchards. Part time orchards. Part time in the field. And uh, well, part of the time I worked in the store and the filling station.

PM: He was the assistant post master one time.

FM: Yeah, I was that. I wasn't the post master. Assistant.

PM: (louder) The assistant!

FM: Well, I done sawmill work. Back then you had to do whatever you could find, you know. A dollar a day. That was big money.

IN1: How did the orchards change over the years? When you first started working in orchards, how would you pick the apples, and I know we have apple packing houses, but back then how did that operate?

FM: Well, in that time most of our apples were sold local. We had apple stand. She said we sold most of them in the apple stand. Some of we'd pack, not too many of them. Later on I got to putting out more orchards, more apple, and we'd color and we'd pack and got to pack a lot of apples. We usually got these migrants during apple picking, we had to, couldn't pick them ourselves.

IN1: And they would come through from Florida?

FM: Ahh, most of them was from Florida, yeah.

PM: You know I was a little resentful toward people coming here working, instead of people around here doing it, until I realized we couldn't do it, it was too much.

FM: You couldn't hire nothin, no help, to take care of it.

IN1: Now Mr. Matheson, back to the apple stand and the apple business, did you all make your own cider?

FM: Oh no, we had it made. A guy in the community made it for everybody that wanted it.

PM: You had to have a machine to mash it up, strain it and everything.

IN1: How is that made?

PM: You mashed up the apples, then strained it out. We sold cider, oh lord we sold cider!

FM: We did make some of ours, cider. My son made it, had it made. Anybody wanted more you make it yourself.

IN2: Who made the cider?

FM: Beg pardon?

IN2: Who was it who made it?

PM: Jesse Swafford, I know made some.

FM: Who?

PM: Swaffords.

FM: Yeah, they made most of it.

PM: But when we started off, somebody down around

FM: Burton

PM: Burton, Burton did it when we first started.

FM: Yeah

PM: The reason we always was careful about who made cider for us is because they would change apples with you and some of them would put rotten apples in it cause I know this man was putting rotten apples in mine. He was making it down there in Five Forks, I believe, no it wasn't Five Forks, what's that place?

FM: No that's right, Five Forks. That's what it was.

PM: Somebody saw him. He said if Polly gets a hold of what you are doing, you'll never make no more cider for her.

IN1: And was that true?

PM: Yeah! I wanted good cider. I want what I sold to be good.

IN1: Well back then people didn't worry about flies and things getting on their apples drying.

PM: No! You know, I was one of the first people in this country who could not stand for flies to get on my apples that I was drying. So I took them, at first, I took some net and put over top of them and everything, and then I got to where I would put screen doors on top of them where no flies or nothing could get to them, and I would crawl up on top of that building up there, that old building, that store building, I would crawl up there and put them on top of the roof there, but I'd put those screens over them. I got our screens, there was some man carrying to this country and he did our windows. He measured them and made screens for them and the screens that he took down, here, and anywhere else he gave them to me, and so I had those screens. I went out there to Bill Matheson's store one time and I don't know who the man was, was drying apples for them, but he had them on some kind of thing and there was yellow jackets on there so fast and so many that you could see the wings and everything on that stuff. I wouldn't have eaten that, Lord, I don't know why he did that, why he didn't know better.

IN1: Well when you dried the apples did you go ahead and cook them up then and can it?

PM: No! You dried them and at night you had to cover them up or when it rained until they dried and when they got good and dry you just took them up and put them in a flour sack or something and kept them.

FM: When we sell them we put them in bags.

PM: Lord I sold all I could make, didn't I Furman? Boy I had a time.

FM: Yeah, you couldn't make enough.

IN1: and that's time consuming to peel them and cut them

PM: Well Furman would help me peel. He worked in the store, you know, and when he had time to spare and he helped me peel the apples, and I'd crawl up on the building there. I always spread mine out so they would dry in a hurry.

IN1: Well when you had your apple stand did you have patrons that would come up from Florida and you would become friends with them and they would come through every year, the tourists, going to the mountains?

PM: I did. I did.

IN1: Do you remember any in particular that meant a lot to you that y'all were friends with over the years and years?

PM: Well but I couldn't call their names now, and I probably wouldn't know them if they walked up, but I had some from Florida that came by and bought stuff. I had some doctors from there, (inaudible) and the first time he ever came there to buy apples from me he asked me, he said, "are these apples wormy?" and I'm always doing things like that and I said, "why yeah, you know protein is valuable and you have to have protein!" (laughs) and he knew better though and every time he came up he'd ask me if I had any protein apples.

IN1: Well you were on a good road to have a good business with all the tourists coming up.

PM: People in the county would come buy apples. We had a business, now I'm telling you, we did. Of course everybody else had a pretty good one too.

IN1: Well why is the apple industry, I guess you would say, why, it seems to me its moving out of Long Creek area, why do you think, Mr. Matheson?

FM: Well, the biggest thing these locals, is the price you have to pay for stuff to spray with, tractor, and all that stuff. It just got out of line. You couldn't make nothing. You would take them to a packing house (and they would say) "we're going to get you \$12 a bushel for these" Well when it come time to settle up you might have got \$3 a bushel. That's the way it went and you just couldn't make nothing. That's the reason I quit. Well that and another reason, somebody stole my tractor. I just said to heck with it.