

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

History of Mecca, Ohio

Life Experience

O. H. 115

WILLIAM FALKNER

Interviewed

by

Beth Hanuschak

on

April 12, 1979

WILLIAM JAMES FALKNER

William Falkner's family dates back to the 1880's in Mecca. His grandparents, William E. And Emily A. Falkner lived in Mecca when it was only a crossroad. Mr. William J. Falkner's parents are Charles and Nellie Falkner. They were owners of a general store located in the center of Mecca.

Mr. Falkner began school in 1914 at Mecca and graduated from the Cortland School System in 1927. Upon graduation he was hired by Packard Electric. He worked there for a year and decided to quit to move to California. After living a couple of years in California, he moved back to Mecca and was rehired by Packard. He was employed by them until 1952. In that year, he quit to take a job selling cars in Cortland. He was a car salesman for fifteen years. In 1967 he quit the car business and began work for Taylor-Winfield where he worked for the next ten years, retiring in 1977.

Mr. Falkner and his wife, Kathryn live in a house that was built in 1838. The house has been in the Falkner family since that time. They are parents of William C. Falkner and Joan D. Root. He is a member of the Mecca Community Church and the Cortland F and AM 529.

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INTERVIEWEE: WILLIAM FALKNER
INTERVIEWER: Beth Hanuschak
SUBJECT: History of Mecca, Ohio
DATE: April 12, 1979

H: This is Beth Hanuschak, studying the history of Mecca and interviewing Mr. William Falkner for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program on April 12, 1979.

Mr. Falkner, I have some information concerning you and looking in the books that I have, July 11, 1880 there was a William E. Falkner and a Emily A. Falkner. Are those any relation to you?

F: They're my grandparents.

H: What can you tell me about them? Did you know them well?

F: I never met him, but my grandmother, I knew her.

H: What can you tell me about her?

F: Well, she was 93 when she died and she was a midwife mostly around Mecca here at that time and all the babies that were born in Mecca, she helped them to get born. They had a farm up the road here about a quarter of a mile. They had a big dairy and they made cheese. Then she made her home with my dad and mother after her husband died, my grandfather, and lived here until she died in 1933, I guess.

H: How many children did they have?

F: Well, let's see. There was Heber, Charlie, my dad, Willie and Ernest. Willie and Ernest died when they were young from the fever.

H: Another interesting thing that I saw in my research was Emily Falkner. Is that the same lady? She was a caretaker of a park in which at one time was the crossroads. Now where is that in relation to where we're right now? Is this the same person?

F: Yes, Right here in the center of Mecca.

H: This used to be a park?

F: It is a park, right out here.

H: Right in the middle?

F: Yes. Well, a caretaker, no. At that time we lived over on the other corner and she had flower beds in each corner. It was kind of a squared off paths and in each corner she had a flower bed. She carried water and took care of it. It was a good big one, about sixteen foot across in each.

H: Has there been anybody that has replaced her in doing that?

F: No.

H: I didn't think so by the looks of it. What was your father's name?

F: Charles.

H: Charles. How many children did he have?

F: My dad was married before he married my mother and he had four children. Then his wife died and he married my mother and they had two. I'm the baby of the family.

H: And you were born about 1909?

F: 1908, the day after Christmas, in case you want to send me a card. (Laughter)

H: I'll remember that. The day after Christmas.

In growing up what can you remember about your parents? Did you have a happy family?

- F: Oh, yes.
- H: What are some of the things you can discuss with us about that? About your childhood? Grew up during the . . .
- F: Well, they were musical. My mother played the piano and my dad played the fiddle. We used to get together quite often when I was just a little kid. My parents were also pretty busy there in the store.
- H: They ran the store?
- F: Yes. They run the store over there on the corner. And after I got grown up, I was about a freshman then, we started playing for dances. My brother played the saxophone. My sister played the banjo. My dad played the fiddle. My mom played the piano and I played the drums. We were the Falkner Family of Five. (Laughter) Believe it or not we were pretty busy. Before I was in high school, I probably made about as much money as I ever made since.
- H: You grew up then during the teens and the twenties. When did you start high school or elementary school then?
- F: I started in elementary school right here in Mecca. The schoolhouse was right across the road from where it is now. They just had ten grades at that time.
- H: You only had to go through tenth grade?
- F: We moved to Cortland when I was in seventh grade. So I started school down there in the seventh grade and then the eighth. Then we moved back to Mecca and then I drove and stayed right on in Cortland and graduated from Cortland.
- H: Is that what it was called then, Cortland?
- F: Cortland, yes.
- H: What year did you start school?
- F: What year did I start school? Holy cow! Let's figure. Well, let's see here, I was six years old and I was born in 1908, so that will make it what, six and eight is fourteen, 1914 wouldn't it?

- H: What was it like going to school then? That was during the war. Do you remember anything about going to school during World War I?
- F: No, not too much. I remember that you couldn't get any sugar and the shortages were then, but heaven's sake we were used to shortages.
- H: Why was that?
- F: Like they say, as poor as a church mouse. Wasn't used to anything. If you lived out here in the country you didn't need anything really.
- We walked to school, of course at that time we had to and it was less than a quarter of a mile.
- H: What did Mecca look like when you were going to elementary school? What can you picture Mecca like?
- F: Well, not too much different than it is now, of course, mud roads. There was a house here on the corner where this beer joint is now. And the store was there where I was raised and the house right across the road, that old gray shingled, that was there. So it hasn't changed that much. This Ideal Store over here has been built since. And the trees in the park got a lot bigger. They were about as big around as your arm almost.
- H: So you went through elementary school and then on to high school. What was high school like? Were you involved in any activities? Tell me what a typical day was like in high school.
- F: Well, a typical day. Of course we had us a dairy. I had to get up about four-thirty and help dad with the chores and then I went to Cortland school and I drove. Then I played football and then come home and helped dad with the chores and then we would go and play for a dance. We'd get home and I would do the same thing the next day.
- H: What kind of subjects did you study?
- F: As little as possible. I took the easiest ones I could. (Laughter)
- H: When did you graduate then, what year was that?
- F: 1927.

- H: 1927; you were just at the end of the twenties. We know it as the Roaring Twenties, a time when people were very carefree and money was available.
- F: Oh yes, and the big bands and man we had some good dances.
- H: Well tell me about them.
- F: There was Tommy Dorsey and Jimmy Dorsey and Jimmy Luntsford.
- H: You're very musical.
- F: Oh man, we had some good bands come in. My wife and I started to go together when we were freshman and we have been together ever since. So we've been dancing together all these years. Oh heavens, you missed it, really.
- H: Tell me where did you see these people play? Where did you see Jimmy Dorsey and Tommy Dorsey?
- F: Over at Yankee Lake and down at the Elms in Youngstown.
- H: Where?
- F: You don't know where that is?
- H: No.
- F: Down at Idora Park, Geneva on the Lake, up at Trinon in Cleveland, Milton Dam, all around.
- H: Oh, I guess. You've been around then. The Elms is no longer there by the way if you've been down there recently. You would never know that it's the same place.
- F: The last time that I was down there Jimmy Luntsford was playing.
- H: I'll have to take you down there because you would never believe it. It's not the same place.
- So then you really got into the twenties. Were there any speakeasies or places of that nature in Mecca? You know, ring gambling?
- F: Not that I know of. That never interested me too much. I never was much for drinking.

- H: Was Mecca affected by the twenties as far as that goes?
- F: No.
- H: It was still rural at that time?
- F: It's just a good place to live.
- H: When you say good place, explain that a little. What do you mean a good place?
- F: I mean I don't know that my dad ever locked the door. I can't ever remember him locking the doors when we went away or when we went to bed. That was one of the good things.
- Well just for instance, I got pneumonia and one of my neighbors came down and stuck his head in the back door and he says, "Kitty, where does Bill keep his milk bucket?" For about two weeks he did my chores twice a day. He would come to the house and talk with you. He'd come to do my chores and then go back home. So that's the kind of neighbors I had.
- H: What was his name?
- F: Skinny Brant.
- H: Is he still around?
- F: No. You know that kind of neighbors you just don't buy.
- H: Then the thirties came and it was hard for everybody. How were you affected by the thirties?
- F: Well I got married in 1929, October 24th and the stock market went to pot on the 29th of October. So we didn't have it easy. I was working at Packard at the time. Although I never was laid off completely, I'd work one day a week and two days a week and then sometimes three days a month. Just enough to keep eating. Of course we raised everything. We had everything we wanted to eat anyhow. But it was a little rough.
- H: You said that you were employed at Packard at this time. What did you do at Packard or how long had you been working there? What was your job? Tell me about Packard.

F: Well, I started to work at Packard shortly after I got out of school in 1927. I worked a year or so and then I quit and went to California and fooled around for a year or so and came back and went back to work at Packard. In 1929 I got married and came back home to live with mom and dad. We lived with them, gosh, I don't know how many years, quite a few. It's a good thing that we did because working one or two days a week you couldn't pay very high a rent.

H: What did you do at Packard?

F: Well, I worked in the Braiding Department for several years. I was group leader for several years and thank heavens for that. It was during the war I went down to the Allison Department to do some welding of parts for the aircraft. Then after the war things got straightened out.

The last day of 1952 I quit for no reason at all. I thought that I would just make a fortune selling automobiles so I quit Packard and went to selling Chevrolets. I did that for about fifteen years and I quit that and went to work for Taylor-Winfield. I worked there for ten years and then I retired.

H: Where did you sell cars or who did you sell them for? Were you in business for yourself?

F: It was Knight Motor Sales in Cortland. Chevrolets, the best in the land. Dick Knight and I, the guy who owned the garage, he and I started school together. We went through school together and we got married about the same time. We were pretty close friends, even yet.

H: When you worked at Packard, what was the average wage? What were you making?

F: I think when I started to work there we were paid 37½ cents an hour. I finally got up to forty-five cents. Then my boss wanted to know if I'd come down and work nights temporarily. They put me on the tape machine temporarily, night turn. I says, "Well, I'm not crazy about this night. It would interfere with my dance plans." I took it. So twelve years later I finally got a day job. Temporary night turn lasted twelve years. And at that time there wasn't any such thing as overtime. We worked twelve hours and it was straight time and you made forty-five cents an hour.

- H: Did you have benefits as they do today?
- F: No, no benefits, nothing. No insurance, no nothing.
- H: Did that bother you? Did you look for that or not?
- F: No, nobody did.
- H: Nobody had it?
- F: No, didn't even think about it.
- H: You worked there and then you took a year off to go to California. What was in California?
- F: Ralph McPheron and I; I had a model T Ford so we took off. We got as far as Arizona and went broke so we had to get a job. I got a job at a mission ranch. Arizona Packing Company owned the ranch, and I got a job shooting blackbirds for forty cents an hour, ten hours a day. They furnished the gun and the shells. I thought that was a good job. My buddy, Ralph, got a job on the mission ranch milking cows. We stayed there about two and a half months or maybe three months and then saved up enough to go to California. When we got over there we got a job at Goodyear Tire and Rubber and we worked there.
- Ralph's dad wrote to him and told him he had to come home. I guess he needed him on the farm. So I quit my job and Ralph and I came home. He and his dad never did hit it off real good, so he just stayed around the summer and then slipped out and went back to Arizona and he's still out there.
- H: What can you remember about California at that time? You were there just a while. What can you remember about it? Where at in California were you?
- F: Los Angeles, I lived on West Santa Barbara Street, 1116 I think was the number, West Santa Barbara.
- H: What was the difference between where you were at and than having come from a small place as Mecca? What was the biggest difference?
- F: I noticed that you'd meet your next door neighbor, he comes out of the house and he'd never speak to you. Everybody was a stranger and it was sad. But the dances were all right. (Laughter)

H: Did you miss Mecca?

F: Oh, not particularly.

I remember one night we went down to a dance at a place called Solomon's downtown. They had two bands and it was ten cents a dance. There was a colored band and a white band. There was a bunch of soldiers in there dancing and about ten-thirty or eleven o'clock a bunch of sailors came in. Ten minutes later they had a free for all. I mean they had a dandy! I tell you I'll never forget that one, wow.

H: So you stayed out in California and came back here and went back to work at Packard and you quit there in 1952. In between that time World War II was going on. What was your part in the war?

F: I was too old and had two kids and they wouldn't take me. I was thirty-six and I had two children and they said, "Go home and wait until you're drafted." They never did draft me, so I never made it.

H: What can you remember about the War not being involved in it? What was Mecca like during that War? Obviously it affected everyone of us. What was Mecca like?

F: Well, I couldn't notice much change or anything. Everybody was doing what they could to conserve gas. Of course they had to at that time and now too. Buying bonds and why working at Packard. They designated some of us to help push the sale of bonds and I was doing that. So there wasn't a whole lot of change around Mecca at that time.

H: What were you doing the day when Pearl Harbor was bombed? What were you doing? Do you remember that day?

F: What was I doing that day?

H: Yes.

F: Ah!

H: Can you remember that day? It was a very infamous day.

F: Well, I can't remember it. The news and everybody was shocked about getting into the war. But I don't remember that date particularly.

- H: So you worked at Packard then, sold war bonds and when 1952 rolls around you're going to quit and sell cars. Why would you make a move?
- F: I don't know. I haven't figured that out yet. I was down at the lodge one night and Dick Knight and I were sitting there waiting for the lodge to start and he said, "Bill, why don't you come and sell automobiles?" I said, "I don't know." He said, "I think you would be all right." So I thought well maybe I could. So I quit my job and went selling cars.
- H: Did you enjoy it?
- F: Oh, yes.
- H: You worked there fifteen years. You sold Chevrolets?
- F: Yes. Well, I was just earning a decent living.
- H: Any unusual thoughts that went through your mind or any unusual circumstances occurred, any funny stories in selling cars. Something that stands out in your mind.
- F: Well there are some things that happened that probably wouldn't be too good on tape. (Laughter)
- H: Go right ahead.
- F: No really, I can't remember anything especially.
- I do remember one time there was a guy stopped in and he was looking at used cars and he looked like a bum. There was three of us on the floor looking out the window and Dick said, "You go ahead Bill." I went out. I ended up selling him a new automobile for cash, no trade in, full profit. So that ended up on my account.
- H: How much did cars sell for then?
- F: Well, around \$2200, \$2300 or \$2500. If you wanted it pretty well loaded, \$2700 or \$2800. A pick-up truck, most of them run \$1600 or \$1700. There's a difference. My buddy bought a truck here not very long ago and he paid close to six thousand dollars for a pick-up truck.
- H: After that, why did you quit selling cars? You worked there fifteen years.

- F: Dick sold the business to some other people and I just thought that I could do better somewhere else.
- H: So you went to Taylor-Winfield.
- F: I went to Taylor-Winfield.
- H: What did you do there?
- F: I worked as a service boy. I run the crane most of the time and I enjoyed it. I really enjoyed working at Taylor-Winfield, a nice bunch of guys.
- H: How many years did you work there?
- F: Ten, then things got a little rough. I got laid off. Everybody got laid off. They were going to go on strike. I thought, well, I guess I'm old enough to retire. So I retired. I was sixty-eight, sixty-nine, something like that.
- F: What can you remember about the fifties selling cars? I know being in the fifties you had the "Red Scare" so to speak, a change in music towards the end of the fifties. What was your reaction to the fifties in general? Did anything significant happen to you or even out here?
- F: Not too much out here. Of course I was pretty dog-gone busy. I was trying to run a farm and sell automobiles. I didn't have a lot of time to fret about anything else. It was during the winter and during the war and before that of course that was when I was still at Packard and I farmed most of Mecca. So I thought it was my duty to raise all the corn I could raise. So I had, I suppose about fifty or sixty acres of corn in and around Mecca.
- When it came time to pick it I had to take time off. And at that time they had a truant officer and if you didn't come out to work they came out to see why. So everyday he'd come up and ask my wife, "Where's Bill?" "He's picking corn." He did that for about two weeks until I got my corn picked. That was a busy time. When I think back on it I worked my darn head off.
- H: Who did you sell the corn to?
- F: I can't even remember.

- H: Do you remember what the going price was? How much you sold it for? How much you received for it?
- F: I don't remember how much I got for it either.
- H: In addition to corn did you have anything else? Did you have animals?
- F: Yes, I had a dairy. I had maybe ten or twelve heads.
- H: Do you do any farming now?
- F: No. The lake came in and covered up the farm so that took care of that.
- H: When the lake came in did they pay you for all your acreage?
- F: They paid for the acreage, but not very much. They just took it over.
- H: Do you remember how much you got for it?
- F: I believe it was sixty-five dollars an acre. I believe. I forget.
- H: What was your reaction when they came in? Were you happy, sad or didn't care?
- F: I didn't care too much. They had been talking about this lake ever since I was a little . . . since my dad was a little boy really. I remember my dad talking about it when I was just a little fella. They were going to build a dam and then they finally got around to doing it. They were talking that they were going to build a dam and dam up Mosquito Creek. They just made a better lake than anyone anticipated them to.
- H: So the people out here then accepted it? They were glad in a way.
- F: Yes. They didn't seem to fight it. A few of the farmers fought it and you can't blame them too much. Some of these farmers they only gave them fifteen or twenty dollars an acre for that. I got a little more than some of them because I had plowed some of it. When they hear plowed ground, this digs a hole faster.. So I did a little better than some of them.
- H: Prior to building the lake I understand there was always a feud between the people living in West Mecca and Mecca. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

- F: (Laughter) When the boys on the east side went over to see the girls on the west side he'd better take his fighting force with him because he'd pretty near always got in a scrap. Then the same thing if the guys come over here and chased our girls, why we chased them back across the creek if we could.
- H: Why?
- F: Oh, I don't know, just because guys like to scrap, I guess. My brother used to go with a girl over there and he'd come home with a black eye quite often.
- H: Do you think that the building of the lake has brought people closer together?
- F: Well, yes. Of course consolidated the schools. There used to be two schools, one over there and one over here. That was another thing, after the lake went in there were all the kids in one school and they got used to each other.
- H: Let's talk a little bit about your family. You were married as you said in 1929. How many children did you have?
- F: I have two.
- H: Are they still living?
- F: Yes.
- H: What do they do now?
- F: Well, my son works at Copperweld. He's a millwright. My daughter lives in Beaver, Pennsylvania. Her husband works for Sun Oil. He is manager of a substation down there. She has two boys. One of them is in the service in Dayton and the other one lives in Chambersburg, [Pennsylvania]. My son has three boys. His oldest is in Korea. The middle one is Robert and he works up in Middlefield, [Ohio]. The youngest was five years old just the other day. There is quite a difference between them. He's a pistol. He's a spoiled little bugger.
- H: His grandparents.
- F: I don't know. I think everybody had a hand in that.
- H: What was it like raising two children in Mecca? Was it easy?

F: Oh yes.

H: Why?

F: Well, you never had to fret about them getting into trouble. I don't know. I used to have a little trouble with my boy. I had a pretty fair lawn here and that was Buck's job to mow it. The guys would come along on their bikes and say, "Come on Buck, let's go swimming." He'd say, "All right." And I'd say, "Hold the phone there, just finish mowing your lawn first." There's a little Tom Sawyer in him. It wasn't too long before he'd be sitting under a tree and about three other guys would be mowing his lawn. They'd get that done and then they'd all go swimming down at the Mosquito Creek. But you didn't have to worry too much about the kids. We should have, but we didn't.

H: How about your daughter?

F: I never had any trouble with that one. She used to come home from school and she used to come in the door and put her books on the stair step and would go in and practice the piano. That was the first thing she did for an hour. Then she'd get her books out and do her homework and she would get that done right away. Buck, he was a little different. He'd just get by by the skin of his teeth.

H: So it wasn't too bad raising children in Mecca?

F: Oh no. In fact anybody that wants to raise [children] when you get around to it move to the country. It was all right, no sweat. Of course the kids didn't have cars at that time like they do now. They had bicycles. You can't get into too much trouble on a bicycle.

H: How old are your children now?

F: Well, let's see. One of them was born in 1931 and the other was born in 1933. So they're getting up there.

H: You keep constantly mentioning this store. Tell me about this store? It's not still there.

F: No, there's a beer joint over there now and I don't even know what they call it.

H: The white building?

F: Yes.

H: Okay. What about this store? Your father owned it?

F: Yes. That's where I was raised, at the store. It was a grocery store and it used to have an upstairs to it. My brothers, my brother Ernest, my brother George, my brother Grant, they used to drive a team and deliver groceries to as far over as Clondick over there on Park Avenue and up to Greene. With a team of horses and a wagon they would take the groceries, take in eggs and butter and stuff and trade. I used to go with them once in a while.

I remember one time my brother Grant was loading eggs out the east door of the store there. And he had a team and they'd run off. I was hanging on to the back end of the wagon and they started. Grant managed to get on and he got them headed west right here. He run them buggers clear to Bristol and it darn near killed them. There used to be two pine trees right out here and one time they run off and then they tried to spread out and run straddle that tree. That stopped them all right, but it kind of wrecked the wagon and harnesses and skinned up the horses pretty good. At least that stopped them. I wasn't on the wagon that time.

H: It was a general store type of thing?

F: Oh yes.

H: Was business good?

F: Yes, I think it was pretty good. Of course my dad used to complain quite a bit and rightly so, I think. People bring eggs and butter and stuff in and do a little trading and get the rest of it in cash and then go to Cortland and spend the rest of it. This used to get under his hide a little.

I remember this one instance. There was a lady from West Mecca come in always. She brought this big country roll of butter and traded it for some groceries and things like that. After she had gone dad was going to split that butter because it was seven or eight pounds whole. There was a nice big rock in the middle of it. (Laughter)

H: A rock?

- F: Yes. So she sold him a rock deal. (Laughter)
Like a big potato a good big one. Dad never
said anything to her. He just cleaned up the rock
and weighed it up. She came in about three or four
weeks or a month later and got some stuff. Dad sold
her the rock back. He put it in the sack and weighed
it up and sold it back to her. She come right back
over and just red headed and started to give it back
and he said, "Now wait a minute. That's the same darn
stone you sold me." So that finished that. So
that's one of the funny things that happened.
- H: Anything else that you remember? That's great.
- F: Oh heavens. I can't think of anything.
- H: That's a very interesting story.

Was that a post office and everything all rolled into
one?
- F: Not since my time. It originally was. It was years
ago a post office I understand, but that was before
my time.
- H: Was it a hotel? Couldn't people sleep overnight,
travelers, at one time?
- F: That was in that old building right across the street,
the grey shingled building.
- H: Oh, I see.
- F: When we bought the store there was this one big room
up over the store. The guy who built it, Ed Miller,
had the store years ago. He used to keep caskets
and things of that sort up there that he sold and a
little moonshine and cider. So if a guy come in and
wanted a drink, he'd take them up with a candle and
go back in the corner and open up the casket and pulled
out a jug. (Laughter) I've heard my dad talk about it,
but that was before my time. Then when my dad bought
it he partitioned it off into a living room, beautiful
nice room.
- H: Is it still like that now?
- F: I haven't been up there.
- H: Do you still own it?
- F: No. Wish I did.

H: Who did you sell it to?

F: Dad sold it to Doc Plumley. I don't know. I forget. I think Pete Roth bought it off of Plumley.

H: Does it bother you now to look over there and see it's a bar other than a store?

F: Yes. It bothers me because they are not taking care of it. That's a wonderful building. That's a good one and they're letting it go to pot.

H: Have you been in it?

F: Not since it turned over to a joint. Steve Evans had it for a couple of years and he took good care of it. He had a little restaurant in part of it. He kept it up in good shape. It's going down hill being the guy who owns it now won't spend a nickel.

H: Who owns it now?

F: I guess the name is Pacurian. I don't know him. I know he just let it go to pot. He paid a bundle for it, I understand. He ought to take care of it.

H: How much did your dad sell it for? Do you remember?

F: I don't have the slightest idea. He traded it for property in Warren. I don't know what the deal was.

H: What did he ever do with the property?

F: In Warren?

H: Yes.

F: Let's see. He sold that to Judge Speak, I think. Do you remember Judge Speak?

H: I vaguely remember him.

F: He married a cousin of mine, Alma Falkner. I don't know whether dad sold it to them or whether he sold . . . I'm not too darn sure whether he didn't trade that place for this one. I may be wrong.

H: Sitting here, Mr. Falkner, and looking at your home, I just love to look at it. I'm sure there's a great history behind it. What can you tell me about it? It's just beautiful.

F: We don't have much history on it. As far as we can determine, around 1838 or 1840 and that . . . I know the beams down in the cellar still have the bark on. It was just trees cut down and leveled off a little. Actually as far as we can determine this house and our family have been connected ever since it's been built. The Miller's, Fobes and the Powers and the ones back years ago that owned this connected with our family.

H: How? How are they? Marriages?

F: Yes. The Powers, I think, were one of the first ones and then the Fobes and then the Millers. The Miller's daughters, Ed Miller's daughters, one of them married a cousin of my dad, Joe Falkner. Her name was Nellie.

H: That name was in that book.

F: Yes. The other one was Mary, Mary Root. She married Jud Root and they owned this house at one time. Alma Falkner, that's Joe's and Nellie's daughter, married Ralph Speak and she's a cousin of ours. So actually we're part of the house. We moved here, when the heck was that? 1924.

H: What have you done to the house? Did you do anything?

F: Yes. There where my wife is sitting now used to be a little bedroom and this was a hallway through here. Dad and I were sitting there one day and we thought that would look better if we just tear that partition out. So we did. You can see it on the ceiling there. We took out the dark hallway out of there and that left two doorways, one here and one there. Kitty's dad was up here one time and he said that that would look better if we just take that wall out and make an arc. So we got busy and tore that out and we put that arc in. That's how that happened. But other than that . . . We resided it of course. Squared it up because it got wobbler-jobbed here a few years ago. I had to get some people to jack it up and put her back together, take the bulges out of it and put a new roof on it. Other than that it's quite like it was.

H: Is there a lot of stories that go with the house? Are there any that you can remember having been in the family that long?

F: There was at one time I understand, now this is here say and that room over there was a doctor's office and there was a door that went out to the north end. Of course that's been torn down. Some doctor, if I could understand that was in there went down and bought this acre of ground out of this farm and built that house next door. That was Doctor Brown since I've been on earth, Doctor Brown's place.

H: Did you grow up in this house? No, you grew up in the store.

F: I grew up in the store. Mary Root, we always call her Aunt Mary. She wasn't our aunt really. She lived here after she and Jud . . . Jud went to Warren and he kind of left her here alone. I used to come over and help out a little bit here and there.

H: Let's talk a little bit about your friends here in Mecca. Is there anyone that really stands out in your mind that you're still close with that you grew up and did things with?

F: I was just thinking a few minutes ago about this Lawrence Simpson. It was back in 1918, I believe it was. Anyhow there was several boys in Mecca that quit school and then they passed a law that if you wasn't eighteen you had to go back to school. Well, Lawrence came in that category and he was in my grade. It was the fifth grade or sixth. God, he was a man. He was probably 225 or 230 pounds and six foot three or four and he was a head bigger than the teacher.

They give the teacher a real rough time. I remember one time Mosier was the teacher and he thought that Lawrence had done something and it wasn't Lawrence it was the guy back of him. Well, anyhow he went back and attempted to shake Lawrence up and Lawrence grabbed him and laid him over the desk and he told him, "You better be careful," he said, "I'll break your back." (Laughter) I remember that and then another, he got away with it. A boy up the road, Cleo Reese, he was another in the same category, but he wasn't near as big as Lawrence. He thought if Lawrence could get away with it he could, but he was wrong because the teacher gave him a tramping. I mean they were all over the school yard, but the teacher won that time. That's another thing you can't get away with today.

H: No you can't.

- F: I know that when I was a kid that if you get the paddling come to you, my gosh, you got it right then. They didn't call in. Well of course they had the whole room as witnesses. They'd bring you up front and bend you over and let you have it. I remember one teacher we had, he had, oh, a paddle about eighteen inches long and probably six inches wide and he spent weeks making that darn thing. He bored little holes in it and I mean when he hit you with that you had blisters. But he didn't keep it that long. Somehow or other that got burned up. (Laughter) Gosh, Almighty, that would straighten you up. It would sting.
- H: Did Lawrence ever finish school then?
- F: No. He got to be eighteen and he quit. He never caused anybody any trouble. Acutually he behaved himself good. Some of the other guys, they'd do something and he would get blamed for it, like this one time I was just telling you about.
- H: What are some other people that you remember growing up with?
- F: Leland Hector. We used to play shinny. It's an old tin can with it's lid cut out. Hockey, only it was out on the ground and you used a tin can and a club you get out of the woods. I was little and I was playing shinny with the bigger boys and Leland Hector hit me back of the head with his hickory club with a knot on the end of it and I mean he clobbered me in the back of the neck and knocked me cold. They thought they killed me, but they didn't. He didn't mean to hit me. I just got in the road, that's all. He was swinging at the can and my head was in the road. (Laughter)
- H: When you were married were you married here in Mecca?
- F: No, we were married in Greenup, Kentucky.
- H: How did you get to Kentucky?
- F: Well, my wife's folks were down in Portsmouth, [Ohio]. They moved up here to farm just long enough for us to get acquainted real good and then they moved back to Portsmouth. I went down there one time to see her and that was a fatal mistake. (Laughter). We had gone downtown and she was going to get her hair fixed and I said, "What do you say? Let's get married." She

said, "All right." So we did and that was that right then. It must have been a pretty good job because it will be fifty years ago this fall.

H: That's great, golden anniversary, congratulations.

F: The twenty-fourth of October. So they must have done a good job on us. Of course we went to Greenup because I wasn't quite old enough. I was just a boy. It was October and I wouldn't have been twenty-one till the day after Christmas.

H: Looking back in your life are there any changes you would like to make? You're seventy and you've seen a lot and I'm sure you've done a lot and it sounds like your just one heck of a dancer. You love to do that. Is there anything you would change in your life if you had to do it all over again?

F: Not really. Not really. I've enjoyed myself. I think knowing what I know now I would have maybe taken a little more care of some of my income, saved a little more so I could have more fun when I got older. (Laughter) But I don't think so. My wife and I always got along beautifully and raised a couple of wonderful kids. We managed to eat three times a day and paid my bills.

H: Another thing that interests me is how has Mecca changed from when you were growing up to now? What has been the change? Obviously it has. It's still a farm community. How has it changed?

F: Really it isn't a farm community. There isn't a farm around here. Lawrence Simpson got a little farm that don't amount to nothing. The lake covered up most of the farms. The Knight farm up here used to be a beautiful farm but nobody farms it. It's gone to pot. Actually there isn't a farm in Mecca that I know of. Earl Knight down here owns the farm, but he just raises young stuff. He don't dairy anymore. That's one of the big changes. And these beer joints that we probably could live all right without. We have a few of those around. And we have some crazy kids that like to use my lawn for a race-track and tear that up a little. You'd be surprised. This little hump right out here, when they come around the bend they see how far they can jump their cars up over my yard. They hit that, (Vzzzzr). They can jumper up there about twenty feet and land right in the middle of the yard. You got to hand it, gosh,

those kids can drive. How they know I'm mad, I don't know. But then they can really handle that car.

H: Have the changes then in your opinion been good or bad? Would you like to see it go back to the way it was when you were growing up?

F: Oh, you can't go back.

H: Right.

F: You can't go back. We could live all right but . . . I see these beer gardens and they don't bother me any. I don't think I've seen anybody around the corner here that had too much to drink in years. Except for the boys that get in a hurry going around and around the square, going around, and around, around, around, about three o'clock in the morning, why, they don't bother us. Those darn Hondas and motorcycles, they are kind of noisy. They keep you up and wake you up during the night and disturb your rest. But then you can't go back.

H: If you had to change one thing what would you change today here in Mecca?

F: If I had to change one . . . If I could change something, oh my.

H: Or wouldn't you?

F: I don't think, no. I'm pretty happy the way things are right now.

H: One of the last questions that I always like to ask is; could you tell us of anyone who can help us with this project?

F: Like I said, I wonder if Lawrence would be interested in help doing anything because he could tell you quite a lot about Mecca. The house he lives in now used to be right across the road here. A little old woman, she was crippled lived in it. "Singing Suzy" we called her. She didn't have any legs. She was an amazing person. She did all of her own work. She would go up and down the cellar and carry a bucket of coal up from down the cellar. She would sing real good. In the evening she would sit on her porch and

sing hymns. Everybody in Mecca remembers "Singing Suzy." She and my grandmother and Miria Shaw used to have prayer meetings and songfests. And . . . next?

H: No, go ahead. What were you going to say?

F: My mother was raised in North Dakota. I was going to take her up there before I went to California. "Singing Suzy" heard that we were going to Dakota and she called me over and said, "Are you going to Dakota?" And I said, "Yes." She said, "I have a cousin in Dakota." She said, "I wonder if you can look them up." I said, "Where do they live?" She said that she didn't know, only Dakota. I said, "North Dakota or South Dakota?" And she said, "Well, I don't know." (Laughter) "Just all I know is Dakota." So I never did find them. She was a dear old soul.

H: Is she married?

F: No.

H: She did everything by herself.

F: She lived there all alone. She did her own laundry on the floor in a washtub. She carried her own water and coal up and down the stairs and she didn't have any legs. She couldn't stand up.

H: What happened? How did she lose her legs?

F: She was born that way.

H: Is that right?

F: She just crawled on her hands.

H: Well, I want to thank you for the time you spent with us and helping us with our project. I appreciate it and thank you very much. I hope you enjoyed it.

F: I hope it does you some good.

H: It will. Thank you again.

F: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW