

Oral History Interview

William Rayford “Bill” Moore

by
R. Kenneth Kirby

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Interview with Bill Moore (b. 1936)

The Samford University Five Mile Creek Oral History project began as a service learning project for the Five Mile Creek Greenway Partnership, conducted by students in Dr. Ken Kirby's Communication Arts 101 class fall semester of 2004. Partnership members needed information about the communities along Five Mile Creek in Jefferson County, Alabama—Center Point, Tarrant, Fultondale, Coalburg, Republic, Brookside, Cardiff, Graysville, and Lynn Crossing—for grant applications, interpretive signage, and other uses as they developed a master plan for parks and greenways along the entire length of the creek. A group of six entering freshmen conducted the initial interviews and research for this oral history. During 2005 Dr. Kirby conducted another 25 interviews and periodically made reports to the Partnership coordinators. Portions of some interviews have been published in the Partnership's newsletter, *Five Mile Currents*.

Bill Moore's father remembered the first fish kills resulting from pollution in the 1910's; before that an uncle had caught a 30-lb. catfish from Five Mile Creek. A creative fisherman, as a boy Bill took fish caught from other streams and put them in strip pits that contained clean ground and rainwater. He tells of playing baseball, hunting rabbits, and swimming in the Alley Cat swimming hole; he also remembers whiskey and gambling in the neighborhood. He now enjoys fishing a cleaner Five Mile Creek with his grandchildren but still doesn't keep the fish to eat. The interview was conducted at his home on June 22, 2005.

MOORE I've always been known as Bill Moore. In fact, on my high school diploma it says "Bill Moore." If somebody called about me, they wouldn't know who "William Rayford" is. I was born in a house up here in the fork of the road (Cherry Ave. and Republic Rd.) where the four-way stop sign is. Right where the new Cherry Ave. goes, it went right through where our house was set. I lived there until I was about, I guess eight years old. My dad bought the place which my son owns now, down here behind me. The creek here has a big bend in it, and my land goes west of the creek, and his goes east of the creek. Between it the creek belongs to us. I was born 5/4/36. When I was just a kid back then, there was nothing living in the area of this creek, in the streams or anything. When I was a kid I loved to fish, and there was one little bitty branch that ran right down across on the edge of my property, on the north side back towards Watson there, that had minnows in it. And that was the only stream around here that had any kind of life in it, because you had the coal mines—the alum water—and "Creosote Creek" we called it. In the creek you could put your hand a foot down in it—and I swam in it, and there's no telling how many gallons I drank swimming in it (laughs)—but you could put your hand a foot down in it, and you couldn't see your hand it was so black with that creosote. And there wasn't a turtle, snake, coon, nothing could live in it. It just killed everything along this creek. My dad told me that when they turned that stuff loose, it was just unbelievable, the stench for

two or three weeks after that. It was terrible; fish just laying dead throughout the whole creek.

KIRBY Did it happen almost overnight, rather than gradually?

MOORE From what he told me, the creek was just completely dead with fish. Of course dad and them didn't know anything they could do about it; in fact, they probably couldn't do anything back then about it.

KIRBY One of my informants said to his knowledge the plants there in Tarrant were built during WWI, so that would have been about 1917 or '18. Do you think that corresponds?

MOORE I have no idea when it happened. My dad was a young man, and he fished this creek and enjoyed it. And I think my great uncle, which would be my great, great uncle caught about a 30-lb. catfish in the back. He's the one—this little area where I live is called Early Town, and my great, great uncle I guess it would be, back in 1884—I've looked at some abstract deeds down there, and I remember that. I retired from land surveying, and I was throwing away a bunch of old abstract deeds and happened to run across the abstract of this land up in here, and my great, great uncle Early owned it. That's where you get Early Town. W.J. Early was his name, and you know what he bought this whole bend for?

KIRBY I guess it was \$1 or \$2 per acre, wasn't it?

MOORE He got it for \$3.75 for the whole thing, for taxes—he got it for taxes.

KIRBY How many acres?

MOORE If I'm not mistaken, that part was just a 40, 40 acres.

KIRBY Why did he choose to settle in this particular place?

MOORE I don't know. He was my mother's uncle, or probably her great uncle, because my mother was born in 1906, something like that.

KIRBY What were your parents' names?

MOORE My dad was William Frank Moore, and my mother was Willie May Estes. She was an Estes, and her uncle was W.J. Early.

KIRBY Were any of them miners?

- MOORE Yes, that's what my dad was. He was a coal miner, which this whole town was. That's where it got its name, from Republic Steel, but you knew that though.
- KIRBY Well, I'd never made the connection, but it makes sense.
- MOORE Warner Mines was part of this too. You know, I don't remember where the mine was, but I know they loaded the coal right across from where I was born up there at the crossroads. They loaded the coal on a big tippie right there, and Republic used to be a thriving little town. It had a couple of theaters in it and all. This was before I was born. Oh, yeah, it had done all the coal doings, except for the strip pits that were still going on around here. In fact, when I moved up here and got to be about 11 or 12 years old, and like I was talking about, I loved to fish, and these strip pits on below me, which have been recovered now under the recovery act, they were all open and all had water in them at that time. I didn't have any place to fish or anything, because there wasn't anything up here—everything was dead—so I put some fish in the strip pits. Everybody told me, "They aren't going to live." They said, "that mining water, its going to kill them; they won't live." So I put them in there, and about six or eight months later my dad went down there and threw some bread out there and backed up into the shade. And he said he saw the fish come up there and start nibbling on that bread, and he called and told me.
- KIRBY The story of the mine water, I think there are different understandings about that, because a lot of the water that was dug initially in the mines was the cleanest, purest spring water you could possibly get. And then as the mines age, that's when the chemistry of it changes and the water becomes polluted.
- MOORE Maybe that was the answer then. I hadn't thought about that. But I remember when I was a kid, the branches that come out of these old mines was just as red, the whole ground would be just solid red. But you're right.
- KIRBY Did you have a well? Is that how you got your water?
- MOORE Yeah, we had what we called a shallow dug well, a small dug well over at my dad's, which wasn't but about 25 feet deep. We had good water. Where my house is built here now, there was a house that burned down before I bought it. They had dug a well which went on down deeper, and they got into old alum water, that red looking water. And when I first moved here, that's what we used, that alum fouled up water. It turned your pipes red and your bath tub and all turned red. But we weren't here for long before we got city water. And I had it converted over. But that well out there that's dug deeper, you can't pump it dry. But the shallow well you can. But this little branch right down here, when I was a kid

there was a branch right behind where I live now, it was a spring. Ralph Sanford's daddy lived next door to us right out here, and he pumped a lot of his water from that spring down there. But that little branch had a few little old crawfish in it; that's all it had when I was a kid.

KIRBY Well tell me, how did you develop your passion for fishing if you lived on a creek that had no fish in it?

MOORE I don't know, but my dad—we used to go over to Mt. Olive, about halfway between Mt. Olive and Sardis (gives directions). When you get out there, there's a little creek called Crooked Creek. That used to be a big thing when I was a kid, my dad and us would go out there and set out, just old limbs with a line and hook on it and catch those little catfish in that creek (indicates about 8 inches long). That was a big thing in my life back then.

KIRBY So your dad was a miner, but at this time had the mines about played out? Was he still mining?

MOORE When he was a young man, he did work in the local mines here. But when they started shutting down, he got hired at Sayreton, over here at Sayreton Mines, and that's where he retired. But you talk about this little branch here, people used to make whiskey over here. Any place where there was a spring . . . My daddy tended this whole bend here—he worked the mine on the 3-11 shift, and he made a crop during the day, every morning. It was my job to hoe corn in that bottom down there. It grew about a quarter mile long, I'd get over there and back and it would be dinner time; I'd get over there and back and it would be time to quit for the evening. The Johnson grass would get up about two feet high and the corn would be about a foot high, and I'd have to pull that Johnson grass out and clean that out. But boy, once you had done that, in two weeks that corn would be 10-12 feet high. It beat anything—that bottom land down there would really grow corn.

KIRBY Did you just eat most of it, or did you sell it?

MOORE We fed the mule with it most of the time. My daddy had a mule, and of course he was a fox hunter too, so he had the corn ground to make cornbread to feed his dogs too. Mostly what corn we didn't eat, that mule would eat all winter. Well, he had chickens and hogs and everything like that. He'd always raise about two hogs a year and kill them.

KIRBY So you use that on the farm; you didn't really didn't take it to market.

MOORE Oh, no, we didn't. He was tending about 10 or 12 acres. There used to be an old song about the mule that said I don't know if I'm working for you

or you're working for me. (laughs) This was way back yonder, and there was a lot of whiskey making going on down in here. I remember in the fall I'd be down in the bottom and cross the creek over there. Under those bluffs over there there'd be water running out of the bluffs, well, you couldn't see them when the leaves were on the trees, but when all the leaves fell off you could see the pots sitting on the side of that hill.

KIRBY You were born in 1936, so this would have been way after prohibition, in the '40s or on into the '50s. Did the law come after them very often?

MOORE Oh, yes. I had an uncle that they chased all over these mountains! Yeah, there was a lot of it went on back then.

KIRBY Did you have any close calls as a boy, stumble across something and somebody point a gun in your face?

MOORE No, no. In fact—well, this branch that comes into the creek, that I told you had the minnows in it—we would go up through there catching crawfish. One of our big things was catching crawfish, put them in the can, and then turn them loose. But if we run by a still, we'd just walk around it. We knew not to say anything about it to anybody.

KIRBY What were some other things you and your dad did—did you hunt?

MOORE Oh, yeah, me and dad hunted all over. When I built my house here, this trailer court here wasn't out here, and we hunted all this area here—bird hunted, rabbit hunted all around here. I killed my first rabbit—I never will forget it—right back of this house down there. When I got grown I started deer hunting and turkey hunting. In fact, I just come in a couple of hours ago from our hunting club. I went down Monday. We did some poisoning on our fields; the grass gets so big it's hard to disk to plant.

KIRBY Did your father or anybody go off to the war?

MOORE No, my dad was a little to old, but my oldest brother Frank was in World War II. He was in the Army Engineers and served in the Philippines most of the time. He told stories about how they'd set off with those ships and just bombard those green islands. There'd be the perfect beautiful island there, and there wouldn't be a tree left on it when they got through shelling it. But he said when they hit the beach, those Japs would come out of those holes shooting at them. I was telling him at church Sunday before last, I wish he would sit down and just start at boot camp and go all the way through his experiences in the services. He's 82 now, my oldest brother. He's the only one who had to go—well, my uncles had to go into the service.

- KIRBY I guess he'd write home every so often and keep you informed.
- MOORE When he was in the service, the only time he got hurt or wounded, he was running down a hill with them shooting at him, and he dove for his fox hole, and a big old thorn went right through his hand and came out the other side. He said he was in the hospital reading a letter that momma had just sent him, and she had had a dream that he was wounded. He said it was unbelievable; he hadn't written her about it or anything.
- KIRBY Wow. Well, your mom—how many brothers and sisters, how many children did she have, was she a stay-at-home mom?
- MOORE Yeah, momma never did work except at the house, you know, housework. But there's my oldest brother Frank, then a sister 18 months under him, and another brother that was seven years older than I was. That's Charles, but everyone called him Mule. You say "Charles" and nobody would know who that was. (discussion of nicknames, mention of Ug Franklin led to baseball) My brother Charles, he played professional ball. And his son, Charley "Butch" Moore, he caught for the Milwaukee Brewers for 14 years. He was in the major league at 20 years old. They called him up at 20, and he caught for Milwaukee for 14 years, then they traded him to Toronto, the Blue Jays. He stayed there for a year and didn't like it, and he had three young boys who were getting up into the teenage years, so he retired.
- KIRBY Did you play baseball?
- MOORE Yeah, I played from the time I was that big. I always threw, and I went off and tried out with Milwaukee down at Waycross, Georgia, back in 1954. I stayed down there about three weeks, and they offered to send me down to class D ball and not give me any bonus money or anything. I mean, I wasn't that good; I wasn't as good as Charles was. So I came on home. I had blisters on every hand and strawberries on my hips from sliding. And I was in love too, in love with my wife. (laughs) We were going together at that time.
- KIRBY What was your mother's life like? Was it just nonstop canning and cooking and cleaning?
- MOORE That's exactly right, that and taking care of us kids. Yep, it sure was. Her mother was an Estes, and they lived right out here. The Esteses were somehow related to the Earlys, and my dad married my mom—
- KIRBY So they were distant cousins, right?

- MOORE Oh, no, they were not related. Well, they were in this community here, in this same community. But that creek, though, it's unbelievable back then how bad it was when we swam in it. We went to what they called Alley Cat swimming hole, over where Ralph Sanford's house it. And then I don't know how many years back it was, when they first started cleaning the creek up, the crawfish was the first thing that came back. And there were millions of them. I mean, big old red crawfish that long (indicates 9-10 inches), and you could go down there and dip them up by the tub full. It was unbelievable. You take a seine, and you'd have a whole seine full of crawfish. But once the pollution got a little better and the fish got back in there, they started eating up all the crawfish, and now there aren't many crawfish in there. The fish have really come back, and if they could ever stop Drummond and clean it up—it's a beautiful creek, and one thing about that creek too, Ken, it doesn't get low like creeks do. You know how a lot of fish get in those pot holes and there won't be any stream running—that stream there has got a heck of a headwater back in there towards Roebuck, because you've got a good stream of water coming down it all the time.
- KIRBY Yes, those springs flow constantly. And there are other streams—I think it's Black Creek that comes in at about Coalburg. It's got mine pollution in it.
- MOORE I saw it not long ago, and man, it was red looking. But it flows pretty good.
- KIRBY Do you remember about when the crawfish started coming in?
- MOORE It was probably about the early '90s. At least that, or probably earlier than that. It would do good for the creek if you could go down and catch fish, plenty of fish. My wife and I caught catfish for a time, and the next year the pollution hit it again, and they turned something loose over yonder, and the next year you wouldn't catch any, or what you'd catch would have a sore mouth or sore places on them like the skin was knocked off them. Pollution.
- KIRBY Now, what era are we talking about now?
- MOORE Oh, that was about six or seven years ago I noticed it.
- KIRBY Okay, so still in the 1990s.
- MOORE In fact, I've noticed the creek being black after a rain. I don't know where the blackness is coming from.

- KIRBY I think there are people who monitor it regularly, and I'm sure they are keeping records of what specific pollutants or whatever are in the creek, and then tracking that back to whether it's just runoff from old mine sites or old industrial sites, or whether it's active pollution being dumped in from the ABC Coke and Sloss. So it's been up and down, and you've caught 15 inch catfish in the past seven or eight years.
- MOORE Oh, yeah, it's doing good right now, since they got on them so bad. Me and my grandson last week went to little Ralph's house, which is up the house from me here, and fished mostly where we used to baptize. We used to baptize in the creek down here. We fished the baptizing hole, which is a pretty little hole in the creek. We caught 19 blue cat and 13 bass.
- KIRBY Is that adjacent to Ralph's property?
- MOORE It's on down about halfway between my house and his.
- KIRBY Because he showed me a baptizing hole that, the way I understand it, I think we were still on his property.
- MOORE Not, well, that might have been the Alley Cat swimming hole on his property. If you went on down the creek (general directions to the baptizing hole), that's where the baptizing hole is. That would be probably between a quarter and half mile from Ralph's property.
- KIRBY Maybe I'm confused.
- MOORE The last one I can remember being baptized there is Jackie Doubleman. (discussion of baptisms taking place in about 1987 and 1992 or '93—it was unclear as to whether they wanted to renew an old tradition as the creek became cleaner) I remember that the creek was clear. Jackie was a pretty big lady; I went to school with her, but she passed away last year. She was pretty big, and our pastor, he leaned her over and both of them went into the creek. (laughs)
- KIRBY They both fell in! What other stories do you have about playing—what did you and the neighborhood boys do when you were young?
- MOORE After I got up to be 10 or 12 I spent most of my time in this strip pit where I put the fish. We would rabbit hunt and all that.
- KIRBY Where did you play ball?
- MOORE Right down here in the Republic ball park, where the trailer park is now. It was a big ball park, just before you get to the railroad tracks down there.

- KIRBY Was it like a civic park, or associated with the school?
- MOORE You know, I guess Mr. H.P. Stith owned the land, and he let them have a ball park. Yeah, I know he did. He had a big ball park, and they used to have amateur baseball back there when I was a kid. Man, there would be 500 or 1000 people there on a Sunday evening baseball game. It was a big thing. Republic had a team, Brookside had a team, Mineral Springs had a team, Alden (tape cuts off). All the towns had their own baseball team. My brother Charles—I wasn't old enough; I was bat boy—my uncle Grady, and Frank my oldest brother was on the Republic team. A third of it was Moores. I never will forget, they were playing one day, and they didn't have but eight players, and uncle Grady showed up. He was a tremendous ball player. The Yankees tried to sign him, and he wouldn't go because they told him he'd have to quit drinking if he played ball. He wouldn't leave it; "I ain't quitting my drinking for nobody." So when Grady showed up he was about half shot down, you know, from drinking. But they had to play him. But he came to bat four times, and he hit four balls into what we called the frog pond. About 350 feet out there was a frog pond with a fence going across it. When the ball went out in the frog pond, you had to go get it. And he hit four out in that thing, three home runs and a triple—one time he fell down, couldn't get around the bases. (laughs)
- KIRBY Do you know what kind of league that was?
- MOORE It was just what you call BABF.
- KIRBY Okay, that's the league that Mr. Franklin talked about.
- MOORE There were some ball players out here then. In fact, you didn't have many major league teams way back there, and you had to be outstanding to go to the majors.
- KIRBY Was there any football?
- MOORE No, not really. I didn't even know how to put on a football uniform until I got to high school. We didn't have park ball out her in the country. We played what we called cow pasture football, me and Ralph Sanford, because right there at Alley Cat swimming hole was an open place, and we had a football game every Sunday evening. The creek now, we really are enjoying it right now. See, my grandkids—we keep three grandkids for my daughter—she brings them by in the morning time and picks them up in the evening. And we go to the creek two or three times a week. Boy, that's a big thing for them to take a lunch and fish. You always catch fish now.

- KIRBY Do you feel safe eating them now, or do you put them back?
- MOORE I don't eat them, no. There is still probably a percent of pollution in them. People have started eating them I think. (more discussion of the baptisms in 1987 and 1992; they seemed to imply but not say that there weren't many baptisms in the decades prior to this period)
- KIRBY 1987—I didn't think the creek was starting to be cleaned up that early.
- B. MOORE (Bill's wife Bobbie participated briefly in the interview): I don't know how clean it was. We used to go down and play in it and wash cars in it when it was Creosote Creek. It wasn't like people wouldn't get in it.
- MOORE They baptized in it even when it was Creosote Creek.
- B. MOORE Now when I was baptized, I was baptized in the pond. They didn't have a baptistery back then. I got baptized over there at Ralph's. I think they didn't baptize because there wasn't any access to it. You know when we baptized down there in 1987 and 1992 a man came in with a bulldozer. Jackie's husband had a bulldozer, and he cleaned it all off. You know where Republic Street is, right past the church it goes right down to the creek. Right before you get to the new bridge there's a road. We used to call that East Warner because Warner Mine Company was all over this community before I moved here. Well, right there is where they cleared of and baptized, right at the end of those houses right there. When I was baptized I'm sure it was because there was just no access to the creek, so we went over to the pond, a private pond. I got baptized in about 1955. From then on everybody used the baptistery until 1987, which is the first baptism. I remember them going to be baptized in the creek just because they wanted to. Tina wanted to be baptized in the creek, and then in 1992 Jackie wanted to be baptized in the creek. Those were just choices. But they used the same location; it's a low bank and easy to get to, but it had to be cleared off.
- KIRBY So it had grown up from disuse, so that suggests that most of the time most people weren't going down there during the peak years of its pollution. But I know people did get in it.
- MOORE People washed cars there in the creek even before they put the concrete bridge in. I happened to think of something that happened right down here, Ken. The trestles—you've got two trestles that aren't two hundred yards apart down there. The creek makes a big bend, so they had to cross it and cross it again. My sister—I guess this was before I was born; my mother told about it—my sister and one of her friends, when they were 10 or 12 years old, they were walking across the trestle, and the train came. They

were on the middle of that trestle down there. On the side they had a barrel, a little place built out there with a barrel where they could get water for the steam engines. He grabbed her, and they got in that little area right there, and that's the only thing that saved them when the train went right on by.

B. MOORE He got me across them twice in my life, and I told him the last time we went across, "Don't you ever carry me across here again." He said, "We'll have to wade the creek coming back." I said, "I'd a lot rather wade the creek than walk this trestle." It's the most frightening thing to me—I can't stand it. You got nowhere to go; you've got to jump off if the train comes. You've got nowhere to go.

KIRBY Where did you go to school?

MOORE I went to grammar school, the first four years, at Brookside. That's when I lived up yonder in the forks of the road. The bus came by, and I'd ride the bus to Brookside. When I started the fifth grade, they had too many at Brookside, so they made me get off—I was going right by Pinkney City School—and they made me get off there for my fifth year, but they only had five grades there. I went there one year, then I went back to Brookside for the sixth through ninth grades, and from there I went to Minor. My whole family was always at Minor. I finished in '54 at Minor.

KIRBY Did the creek flood as much when you were a boy?

MOORE No, not as bad as it is now, but it flooded pretty good. I remember one time daddy planted the whole bottom down here, or, probably last of April. That's when you plant the corn. When you plow it up it's all loose. Well, the flood came—he'd planted the whole thing, and had corn, fertilizer and everything—and the flood came and just stripped everything off his field. All you could see was just where the plow had hit the hard stuff. Everything else was gone—all his corn, fertilizer, soil and everything gone down the creek.

KIRBY What year was that?

MOORE I was about 13 or 14 years old. It flooded, but never like it does now. It never got in Ralph's house like it did with that 100 year flood.

KIRBY People think it's worse because of the development in Center Point.

MOORE And they're speaking of 1000 more houses between Gardendale and the Coalburg area. Unless there's something else done, the flooding is going to get even worse than it is now.

- KIRBY I can't picture what tributaries go through there.
- MOORE Mostly small branches, but a lot of it goes into that Black Creek you talked about. Between here and Gardendale part of it goes into Newfound Creek. Do you know where Powder Mill Creek is? Powder Mill Creek goes in at Brookside, right there above Brookside.
- KIRBY Back to your parents, you said your mother was a homemaker, do you know if any of your relatives or friends' mothers who went to work during the war? You know, how women had to take over jobs from the men—were there any “Rosie the riveters”?
- MOORE No, none that I know of.
- KIRBY Ralph said that his mother worked in the powder mill.
- MOORE Well, yeah, I didn't know that until a while back. Yes.
- KIRBY I haven't heard of many people in the Five Mile Creek who has those jobs or knew people that did. (speculation about the draft, war jobs) How did you and your wife meet?
- MOORE We were in high school, high school sweethearts. We dated a long time, over two years.
- KIRBY So when you started having kids, did they go down and play in the creek?
- MOORE Oh, yeah, gosh. She had to whip Mark every day for getting wet. They didn't go there every day, but they would slip off down there and go swimming. I really wish my dad would have lived to see the creek cleaned up. Bobbie: Mark went fishing down here all the time in the strip pit.
- KIRBY Where did you live when you first got married?
- MOORE We lived in this little house right next door.
- KIRBY So you don't have any good stories about kids about getting lost or anything down by the creek.
- B. MOORE These kids don't get lost either, but they sure love to play down there.
- KIRBY There is something about clean, clear flowing water that's just magical.
- MOORE That's the reason we just want it to be cleaned up so bad. Me and Wayne Teer who lives out here, we went to Montgomery two years ago. They

had a meeting down there when the EPA was getting on ADEM so bad, and the EPA was just about taking it over. He and I went down there, and then Sloss came in, their lawyers, and said they were going to clean the creek up—they were all for it—because they didn't want the EPA to take it over.

KIRBY Yeah, they could handle the ADEM people, but they were afraid they couldn't handle the US EPA!

MOORE Oh, yeah. "We want to do this. We want to clean it up." But as long as it's been—when did the Clean Water Act come in?

KIRBY Oh, it was late '60s or early '70s.

MOORE That's how long it's been going on, still having to fight to get it completely cleared up.

KIRBY But isn't there in this part of the country, or maybe in this part of the county, isn't there a kind of work ethic, a kind of "this is how we live" idea: "we are an industrial place, and we mine and make steel, and if there's some pollution that goes along with it, so be it." Everything in live has its tradeoffs—isn't that the attitude?

MOORE Of the people you're talking about?

KIRBY And particularly the corporations.

MOORE The corporations, but the people who live on the creek, they are very upset about the pollution. You may have some people working out there who are scared you are doing away with their job, which they aren't going to do. Drummond hasn't spent the money they should have. They are a multi-billion dollar corporation, and that's just a small subsidiary of it. They've just been paying those small fines and all that, and they get by with it.

KIRBY Well, maybe I'm wrong. Some people argue that in the "jobs versus environment" area, a politician, if he wants to get elected, had to talk about jobs and not environmental protection.

MOORE Oh, yes.

KIRBY He has to put more emphasis there than on the other.

MOORE Oh, yeah, that's right. I got irritated with my representative, Biddle. I found out they were having a meeting about the creek. They were going to override ADEM, which I guess you heard about.

- KIRBY Yeah, well, I haven't tried to follow all the ups and downs of it.
- MOORE They were overriding ADEM, so I called him on his cell phone. He was going to Montgomery, and I told him about people being upset about that. He said, "Oh, we aren't going to do anything to hurt that creek." He told me, oh, they weren't going to do anything like that. He got down there and voted to override ADEM on letting Drummond pollute. I got upset about that.
- KIRBY You didn't vote for him again, did you?
- MOORE No. You can't put that much confidence in what people tell you. A politician, he's going to go where his bread's buttered at.
- KIRBY And like they say, you know how you can tell a politician's lying—his lips are moving.
- MOORE His mouth's open!
- KIRBY What other things about growing up on the creek do you remember? Are there any other flood stories? Ralph had a good story about his cows washing down the creek.
- MOORE I helped Ralph gather them up. But mostly we just swam. We would go down there in that old polluted water. I don't see how we lived from it. We went down to that Alley Cat swimming hole, and we'd skinny dip. When the girls came down to go in, they'd holler before they got down the so we could get our bathing suits on. That was the biggest thing, swimming.
- KIRBY Tell me again about the quarries I think it was.
- MOORE Oh, you mean where they stripped the coal? When they stripped the coal around here, it just left big open areas, and they filled up with water, rain water and ground water. That's the reason everybody told me the fish wouldn't live. There were strip pits along here for about a mile.
- KIRBY Are they all filled in now?
- MOORE They were filled in under that reclamation act. They came here, and I signed the paper for them to fill it in, and they planted trees on there.
- KIRBY About how deep were they?

- MOORE One pond was on my land, probably six or seven feet deep in the deepest place. It was probably a half acre I guess. Then there was another one about two hundred yard that was about three feet deep. But on the other side of the railroad tracks there was a real deep one. That one was, whoo, 30 or 40 feet deep. Mr. H. P. Stith, who owned it, he stocked it with fish and wouldn't let anybody fish in it. In fact, I'd buddy up to him when I was a kid, and he'd let me fish with him every now and then. He had big fish in it.
- KIRBY But that's really resourceful, that you would stock the lake with fish yourself, since you didn't have any in the creek.
- MOORE I put one big old what we called Appaloochi cat or flathead cat in there, and I put a big old red fish, an old goldfish about that long that we got over at Bayview Lake, me and my brother. We caught him over in Bayview Lake and brought him and put him in there. There's no telling how many times I caught that big red fish and that big old cat. But those fish, I would feed them. When I was a kid I'd take my BB gun and kill birds. I'd kill eight or ten a day. I'd take the birds down there. And the fish got real thick in there. I wasn't catching them and taking them out. So there would be a swarm of bream there.
- KIRBY So they were reproducing.
- MOORE Oh, yeah, they were reproducing. And I'd take those birds and pull them apart, and boy, there would be a swarm like piranha. They didn't have much to eat; you see, there wasn't much undergrowth. I would do that every day, and in fact they would follow me around the bank. The got to where I fed them bread so much, that I could take bread and put it in the back of my palms like this, and I'd put my hands down in the water like that.
- MOORE They'd come in to get that bread, and I could catch them in my hands.
- KIRBY Did you eat any of those?
- MOORE The first ones we ate, they had been in there two or three years. My dad went down there and caught a bunch of little cat. And my granddaddy—it was 1950—he had stomach cancer and couldn't eat anything. And daddy caught a dozen of those and cooked them for him, and he couldn't hold them down either. But that's the first fish we ate out of there.
- KIRBY And it didn't make you sick?
- MOORE Oh, no. That water was clean; you could see ten feet deep. It was clear water. I don't think anybody was afraid to eat fish out of the strip pits. I put them in there in 1948, and that was about 1950. (discussion of

people's warning that fish wouldn't live there when he put them in because it was mine water; I guess, though it was never stated, that because they lived, everyone assumed the water was okay?)

KIRBY Do you remember, was it a bad death?

MOORE Yes. He was sick for over a year. He was a big man, probably weighed over 250, was about six foot four.

KIRBY Did ye waste away toward the end?

MOORE Yes, he wasted away, had a lot of pain.

KIRBY That's one thing where the "good old days" weren't as good as they might have been.

MOORE My daddy he knew that. You talk about the good old days, and he'd say they weren't too good. When we lived at the crossroads, when he worked in the local mines, he'd leave in the morning time. It would be cold, and he'd work in the mines where there was water and get wet. It wasn't too cold in the mines; same temperature all the time. But he'd work in that water and get wet up to the waist. Then he had to walk about a mile to the house, and when he got to the house his pants would be frozen, like he had stove pipes on. He'd get behind that old pot bellied coal stove and stand in a No. 3 washtub and take a bath. You know how those coal mines are. I'll never forget that. After a while they were working six days a week. He was going to the mines in the morning when it was dark, and when he came out it was dark, and he said the only time he'd see the sun was on Sunday.

KIRBY Would this have been during the war, trying to get as much coal out as they could?

MOORE Yeah, it probably was. I was born in 1936, and in fact it might have been right in there, because during the Depression you know people had such a hard time.

KIRBY Ralph is a little older than you, right?

MOORE Yeah, Ralph's 72 I think, and I'm 69.

KIRBY He talked about picking up scrap metal and selling it.

MOORE Oh, yeah. When the mines shut down we used to go up there around the slate dump and the coke ovens. (directions to where coke ovens used to be) The coke ovens were all along the mountainside there. The coke

ovens were built into the mountain. Back to the left of the coke ovens they had what they called the slate dump, where they separated the coal. And that slate, there was just a mountain of it. It's still up there, the slate it. Up on top of that mountain they had a reservoir for the water for all the mining doings. We used to go up there. It was a concrete reservoir, seems like about 75 by 100 feet, and about 20 feet deep.

KIRBY Do you think they pumped water out of wells up there, or was that creek water?

MOORE The only thing I remember, they had a big pipe coming into that reservoir, looked like an eight inch or ten inch pipe. I remember that well, but where it came from—I believe, oh yeah, over the hill there was a little mountain that separates the hollow right behind it, and they had a dam up there where they caught water. I bet that's where they got it, but it was all shut down before I was big enough to remember anything. But I remember where they had that hollow dammed up, just a little stream coming down the hollow. That's where they got it to the coke ovens. Those coke ovens were there until, I think they dozed them in. I don't know why they did that; there would have been something historical there if they'd left them. Up there they had to cross a little stream to get to the coke ovens and the slate dump. They built a concrete bridge there about 20 or 30 feet wide and about 20 feet long. On Sunday evening all the gamblers used to come out of Birmingham and everywhere, and they'd gamble on that concrete bridge way up there in that hollow. They used to hire some of the boys, when they started gambling into the night, to hold the lights for them.

KIRBY Did you ever do that?

MOORE No, I never did, but some of the boys were hired to hold carbide lamps for them so they could gamble.

KIRBY I guess that was completely illegal.

MOORE Oh, yeah. They went up there, and they used to do it on the ball diamond.

KIRBY Those are good stories that I wouldn't know to ask. Are there any other things like that that I just wouldn't know to ask about?

MOORE It's always been an old mining town, and back then a lot of wildcat whiskey was made and sold here, like I was talking about. I remember when I was a kid going up to the post office, that people would drink that stuff until it was all gone. They wouldn't just drink a little, and I've seen people passed out in the ditches up there. In fact, one night my oldest brother Frank came in from Brookside where he was dating his wife. And it was snowing. Mr. Wade Martin, who used to live down here in East

Warner, he was real bad to drink, and he was lying there in a ditch. My brother was walking up toward the house and heard him groaning. The snow had covered him up. He got him out and took him up there and thawed him out in front of the fireplace, and saved his life I guess. He would have probably frozen.

KIRBY And these were just the working people, just the regular citizens, not bums or hobos or like that.

MOORE Right, they would work five days a week in the coal mines. You can imagine, digging coal. And on the weekends, that was their let-up.

KIRBY They wanted to blow of some steam. So I guess they'd stay sober during the week.

MOORE Yeah, yes. In fact, my dad drank when I was a little kid. I barely can remember daddy drinking, but he quit, you know, quit early. But he drank when I was real little, six or seven years old. My older brothers would remember when he used to drink. But everybody in the whole town, that was the thing to do, you know. That was the thing to do. A still blew up right here behind the house when we were building this house. I didn't even know the still was down there, and the revenuers blew it up. My uncle Grady and some of his friends, there was a pool of water going down to the ball park, where everybody went down there every day. It wasn't more than 30 or 40 feet off of the road going down there, but it was real thick, and they made whiskey, had a whiskey still there where people were going by every day. Bobbie: Grady used to brag, "I've walked through your yard at night carrying a 75 pound sack of sugar to take to my still." Bill: They used to take hand cars down here on this railroad track and tote their sugar back to the creeks and springs. They'd haul their sugar in and whiskey out on those cars. And there was a lot of whiskey being made inside the mines, the old abandoned mines here.

KIRBY I think it was Ralph that mentioned that too. How far did you wander when you were out hunting?

MOORE All over these woods, all up and down this creek. I hunted with a BB gun, like I told you, then I was promoted to a .410 shotgun.

KIRBY Were there any accidents—anybody fall down a mine shaft, get lost, die?

MOORE No, we all have been mighty lucky over the years. We came close to being snake bit and stuff like that, but nothing bad.

KIRBY Copperheads, or water moccasins?

- MOORE It was both. In fact, I was raised back over here, where my son lives now, and there were a lot of copperheads around where the chickens were. We had a barn where we put the corn, and the rats were real bad into the corn, so that brought the snakes in. Daddy was a big fox hunter. He used to have Walker dogs. He'd have eight or ten dogs in the dog pen there, and you know, snakes get under old boards, and they got pretty bad.
- KIRBY So I guess you went in there with your .410 and popped them off, huh?
- MOORE Yeah, well, with a stick and rocks most of the time. Yeah, we roamed these woods back when I was a kid. That was the only thing you had to do back here in the country. If I wasn't working—one of my biggest chores was doing the hoeing. Daddy would plow, and I was the one that had to hoe all the corn. Another chore I had was getting in the wood and coal or the fire the next morning.
- KIRBY Where did you get your coal?
- MOORE Around these strip pits, where they had abandoned the strip mine. We had an old truck, and we'd dig it out. In fact, we were getting some coal in the strip pits across the creek, me and my dad and brother. And all of a sudden, the whole bank just jumped out and hit daddy right here in his chest. I guarantee that rock was big as this couch here. And me and my brother got it off of him. It busted his chest. The doctor said if he hadn't been real strong in his chest, it would have killed him. It broke several ribs, and he was laid up for a while. There's no telling what that rock would have weighed, but we got it off of him.
- KIRBY Yeah, that's when the adrenalin kicks in. Did you leave him there and run for help, or one of you stayed with him?
- MOORE I don't remember exactly. Evidently we got him in the vehicle. But I'm just blank from there. I would have been 11 or 12 years old, and Mule would have been a teenager. He was seven years older than me. But somehow we got that rock off him.
- KIRBY Church—did you go to church as a young boy?
- MOORE (describes the location of the first church building for Republic Baptist) I guess my brother and them started the new church, where it is now. We moved to there, and the Holiness church took over that building. It finally burnt down years later. But while we were going to church there, I remember an incident about the Ku Klux coming up there. You know how boys are, we'd go up there to church, but we'd stay on the outside and wouldn't go into the church. Boy, all of a sudden these two cars came wheeling in there, and they all got out with their white robes on, and it

scared us! We'd always heard about the Ku Klux and their . . . of course, they did some good. People that didn't support their families back then, they'd take them off and give them a flogging.

KIRBY This was white people?

MOORE Yeah, white people, right. They came up, and we shot into that church like a bunch of squirrels. They all came in and sat in the congregation with their hoods on, and after it was over they left. But they got our attention.

KIRBY That's the first mention of them I've heard, so I don't know if they just weren't active in this region.

MOORE I don't really know, but I remember that well. I heard, you know, the Ku Klux was bad, I know they were. But when they were formed they had some good points about making sure a man took care of his family. If a man wasn't doing right and running around on his wife or doing something like that . . .

KIRBY Even if he wasn't a Klan member, right? That was one aspect of community life they were going to police themselves.

MOORE Right. Of course, you know in any organization you are going to get people in there that are not doing right, and they're going to take that organization and take advantage of it. That's what happened to the Ku Klux really.

KIRBY Was there Sunday School, Training Union?

MOORE I don't remember at the old church, but at the new church I remember going to Sunday School and Vacation Bible School. Vacation Bible School was a big thing for us. (tape off) At my granddaddy's house he had one of those porches, and he'd put the cotton there. We would play in that cotton, a mountain of it. There was a mine across the road that was still open, and my grandmother Moore kept her milk and stuff in the stream running out of that mine. That water was just ice cold. Back about 20 or 30 feet back in that mine she'd keep her food. That was the only refrigeration they had.

KIRBY Did you have an ice truck that came around?

MOORE Yeah, when we lived in the forks of Republic Road and Cherry Avenue we had a big old blanket. The ice truck would come around. You'd buy a 50 or 75 pound block, then you'd take a blanket and cover that up with it. When you needed ice, you'd go back there and chip what you wanted.

(Not on tape—at lunch he tells the story of finding two fox cubs—kittens?—and having them as pets. Bobbie described them as having both dog and cat-like qualities, sleeping during the day and wanting to go out at night. They kept them in the house a lot of the time, and they described them as good pets. We didn't discuss what eventually happened to them.)