

GERT SMITH
Interviewed by Thomas Purdy
July 9, 1974

TP = Tom Purdy
GS = Gert Smith

TP: We're at the nice cool residence of Mrs. Gertrude Smith today, which is the 9th day of July 1974, to get Mrs. Smith, I'll call her Gertrude, as I've always known her, to tell us a little bit about her remembrances of Purdys, where she, I believe, was born and brought up. Gertrude, could you tell me a little about your family and where you lived in Purdys?

GS: Well, I was born in the house that was formerly owned by the Fred Danns family, as I understand it. I was born there. And then when I was very small, I do not remember, my father bought the place where I grew up, which is owned now by Joseph Martinez

TP: That's on Route 116,

GS: 116

TP: Up just beyond the Methodist Church.

GS: Yes. He bought that from a fellow by the name of Coullier.

TP: Was that the same Coullier, that's the engineer that built the reservoir?

GS: Not Coullier, Stocum.

TP: Stocum

GS: Stocum. Coullier was married to the Stocum girl. It was from the Stocums.

TP: Mrs. Coullier was a Stocum. It was from the Stocums.

GS: Yes, my father bought that place and bought the big house, it was eleven rooms and a couple of barns and 10 acres of land for \$3,500.

TP: My goodness.

GS: I remember him telling me that.

TP: You couldn't, you couldn't buy half an acre for that now, could you?

GS: No. And he sold, I imagine about a half an acre, to my grandfather, Uel Bailey, right next door, he used to own the homeplace, and that house burned.

TP: I think I just barely remember, and that was where Murrays live now.

GS: Where the Murrays live now, that was rebuilt.

TP: Do you remember who rebuilt that house?

GS: I don't remember that. I have no idea.

TP: But the Murrays live there now.

GS: The Murrays live there now, yes.

TP: And that is the house just below Saunders home. Well your father, as I remember him, also had quite a large store.

GS: Both stores were moved up from the old village. He had a hardware store and a general store. And over the part that we knew as the hardware store he had a great big hall. It was just lovely, I roller skated there many a time. And dances were held up there. And I can remember that as a child.

TP: I remember going in there and I remember I always got a great kick out of your father. I'd ask him I'd say, "Mr. Smith I'd like to buy some rope." And he'd say, "Well, I guess I have some. You can go upstairs and see if you can find it." And I used to have a ball up there in the top floor of the store looking for things. Everybody else you could see had been up there, looking for things, and left them about where they dropped them.

GS: That's right. And it ended up...He did, he teared that up. And that when we had the roller, we used to roller skate up there. And I remember while the floor was very well waxed they had the dances up there. And I remember years ago I was only a small child and I wanted to go to all these things and of course I wasn't allowed to. But if I could get up there I'd go anyway. And one night, they had a dance, and I assume it must have been for the Negroes. And I remember ?? sat at the head of the table, playing the violin. He could play by ear and he played good too. And I remember him saying, "The gal in the pink dress, take the cake!" Cake walk . I wanted to cake walk, I got up and danced. I finally got up, that's what I did because I know one night, I was bound I was going and I was only about nine years old and my father and mother decided I wasn't going. And I didn't get there. And I know that was years ago when the Bradleys lived up in North Salem.

TP: Where did the Bradleys live?

GS: Eva Bradley, she lived, they lived up in North Salem. She used to go to dances. I remember that much.

TP: Over your

GS: Father's store. Yes. So, that was that. Then of course, the barns, one barn, one barn they took down back there and the other one burned. And that's when, what's his name there, Williams boy burned. Burned up on Christmas morning, I'll never forget that.

TP: Oh yes

GS: That was sad.

TP: That was Willie Williams' child. Percy Williams

GS: Percy Williams' boy.

TP: Oh, Percy Williams' boy. And that was William William's grandson

GS: Yes, that's right

TP: And they are descendents of the Worth, there in Purdys. I remember that now. That was

GS: A long time ago. I don't know how many years.

TP: Now was that one of the barns there that burned

GS: It was a barn that my brother made into a house.

TP: That was your brother, Uel.

GS: Uel. Yes, and that burned down.

TP: Well, now you had two brothers, Uel and Sam.

GS: Sam. Yes.

TP: And, Uel, I remember, died several years ago.

GS: They both did.

TP: And, when did Sam die?

GS: Sam died about 15 years ago. Fourteen years ago, in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

TP: And where did Uel die?

GS: Florida. Miami

TP: In Florida. That's what I thought.

GS: Yes.

TP: Now, Uel, for a long time, had a garage.

GS: That's right.

TP: There which is now I believe the Church Hall.

GS: That's right. Xxx made into the church hall.

TP: Made into the church hall. And that was done about 10, 12 years ago.

GS: Oh, more than that.

TP: More than that.

GS: More than that, because

TP: About 1963

GS: I'm not sure whether she sold it to the church or whether he did. See, he's been dead about eleven years. So it must be before that, oh yes.

TP: Well, I remember, as a small boy. That I believe there was a garage there. He started a garage and did some work there and he used to have a big anvil. And on the fourth of July he would load powder, gun powder into the anvil and pack it down and had a fuse from the bottom of it. And it was a big event for us to go over there and he would light the fuse and we'd all run as little kids and plug up our ears and the thing would go "Bang"

GS: My father that used to do that one

TP: Was that your father?

GS: That's my father that used to do that for the fourth of July. It was a big thing. He spent more money for those boys, for those firecrackers. And I hated every one of them. And we had in the back of the big house there was an old building we called the wood shed and one, and then he used to have a big market basket full, each one had a great big market basket full of firecrackers and fireworks. And some how or another they got out there playing with the boys, and one of those baskets didn't get a fire. Well you never heard such banging and rockets going, here there and every other place. He went and done it all over again for them.

TP: I remember, I remember now his doing that. He was really a wonderful, wonderful character.

GS: He was a character. He was very friendly. I'm just saying, I mean you could put me in a room with a dozen people and Xxx have a ball, it wouldn't bother me.

TP: That's a great gift. A great gift

GS: Yes it is

- TP: One thing, thinking back, way back when your father ran that store, I remember they used to have all kinds of fruit out in back. Apples, they had apples, and I remember going and picking raspberries. The boys used to get so many cents a basket for picking raspberries. We'd go and pick raspberries and, of course, we don't know how many baskets we ate in the process of picking a basket. But, I remember it was quite an event when the raspberries were ripe. To go over there and I would remember the Solomon boys and Merwin Voris, and they were my particular pals and contemporaries. We used to go over and pick and eat raspberries there.
- GS: He used to pay those kids, for strawberries, 2-cents a basket
- TP: Oh, strawberries, too.
- GS: And he used to sell them 2 baskets for a quarter and heap them up. They were rounded, they really had a little hill on top of them. Two baskets for a quarter.
- TP: Well, I remember years and years ago, going for a ride with my father. And, he pointed out a big, beautiful, bushel basket of apples sitting on your father's stoop out there, with a sign, with a sign marked \$1. Father looked at this bushel of apples and turned to my mother and said, "Can you imagine that? He wants a dollar for a bushel of apples." [laughter] Father just thought that was something unheard of.
- GS: Isn't that awful. Think of today
- TP: I hate to think what you pay for them today.
- GS: \$7.00 a bushel. I know that because I bought a half a bushel and they were about \$3.50, \$3.75.
- TP: Well, that will look cheap years from now.
- GS: I hope not.
- TP: Gertrude, can you tell me about your father's store. Now right next door to it, toward our old homestead, next building there is the church and the rectory, or the manse. Could you tell me when that church was built there? Was it built or moved there?
- GS: No, it was built in 1903
- TP: The church was built
- GS: At a cost of \$5,500 for the church and the so-called parsonage. My father sold that acre of land, no it's a half an acre, to the church. At that time they thought that was ample. That's why they're having such a time now parking because there just isn't room enough there. And
- TP: Now was the manse, or the parsonage, it's Presbyterians that call it a manse; it's

Methodists call it a parsonage

GS: Parsonage, yes they do.

TP: And Episcopalians it's a rectory. So, the parsonage, that was built the same time the church was?

GS: Yes.

TP: I understand that now is closed, nobody is living there.

GS: It's rented right now.

TP: Oh, it is rented now.

GS: To people by the name of Mulligan. And I believe Mrs. Mulligan wants to start a nursery school there. She teaches in a private school I believe in New York at the present and she wants to get out of New York and she wants to run a nursery school.

TP: Well there were, the house next door to that. I remember that was years and years and years in the building. And that belonged to Donald MacPhail. Do you remember when that was actually built?

GS: The first house?

TP: Well, the first house burned.

GS: Yes.

TP: When was that built?

GS: I don't know. I can't remember.

TP: But then the family took the remains down and built this one

GS: That's right.

TP: That was built around in the 30s, wasn't it? Or was it since then?

GS: No, it must have been then because we lived in the Methodist parsonage for eleven years and I would say it would have to be the late 20s, I would think.

TP: The late 20s.

GS: I would say so.

TP: Well, do you remember who owned it after Dr. MacPhail sold it? I know a number of

people. There was some English family that lived there at one time that had a lot of children that were sort of unruly, that ran out all over the place. I can't think of their name. We finally thought of the name of the people who owned that, which is Halvorsen,¹ that had the unruly children. Then they sold it to L'Eplattenier, was that their name?

GS: Yes.

TP: And he made apartments there.

GS: He made apartments there. It's been very satisfactory. He's done a lot of work there. I lived in that Methodist parsonage for quite a few years when I was first married. I watched that house being rebuilt and they had a mason there that liked plenty of liquor refreshments and he got a little groggy as the day would go on. And I know that after he got it built, he built these fireplaces and it isn't any of them work. Then they had a carpenter and he also liked his refreshments. He used to get pretty much under the weather and used to sleep on the roof for the better part of the day. I used to be greatly amused to watch what was going on. They were not unruly, they were not loud, they just would get so inebriated they couldn't work.

TP: Well, I often wondered why it took four or five years for that house to get built and I remember it got really weather beaten in the process of being built. But now I finally found the, years later I found the answer. Well now a few minutes ago you were telling me about a house up in the other direction, which is up high on a bank. The second house before Oak Ridge Road, which is now the Saunders home there. Could you tell a little bit about that house, when you first remembered it.

GS: Well, it was built when I first remember it. Back when we all lived there. Having been in the house many times, it's a beautiful home but I can't tell anything specific more than that about it.

TP: Well, he, it was sold later to Bernie

GS: Saunders

TP: Saunders and he has run a very nice home for alcoholics to dry out there. And they seemed to be very sincere and a very nice place. I remember when they built a swimming pool back of that place. And this was sort of a home built swimming pool. And I remember there used to be a lot of algae on it in the summertime and as the summer would go the algae get on, the algae'd get thicker and thicker. And I used to go up there to go swimming once and a while. But it had a big shutter there that they'd scrape off the algae, they'd scrape it off into one side of the pool so we could go in the other side. I know they'd fill it with a garden hose and the garden hose would just about keep up with

¹According to the deeds filed in WC, Donald T. MacPhail sold to Colette Renee Halvorsen aka Pratt and she sold to Don Shoemaker and he sold to L'Eplattenier. This would be the two family house that Sirignano owns now - 2014. One of those deeds lists Uel B. Smith.

the evaporation. I don't know if they still have that, whether, I don't believe Barney stills has that. It probably has modernize it, if he does have it there.

GS: Yes, Barnie, he did that. And he's had people there that were so in love with the place and after they got straightened out they'd come up there on the weekends, because they said it was a nice place to stay and they had a swimming pool. And it was less expensive to go up there and spend a weekend then it was to go way off 100 to 200 miles from New York. These people come back there

TP: Well now, the next place I wanted to ask you a little bit about was the place where Ferd Guss lives. A lot of people called him Fred Guss but his name really isn't Fred its Ferdinand.

GS: Ferdinand, that's right.

TP: But he's known as Fred.

GS: Everybody calls him Fred.

TP: I hope to have an interview with him to get a little more information but in case I don't get a chance to talk to him could you tell me what you know about that house?

GS: Well, he bought it from Alice Lobdell who was the wife of Darius Lobdell. And, I asked him the other day who owned the house before Darius Lobdell and he said, well, Darius' father bought the house from a person by the name of Ferguson in 1847. And that was about as much as I know.

TP: Well, I think that Ferguson was probably the Yates Ferguson which Ruth Keeler referred to in my talk with her and that, I believe was her maternal great grandfather. And he lived there in Purdys and my family bought a house from him as she pointed out in her interview. Well I remember that house. I remember they used to sell milk to the whole village years ago. And, as a small boy I used to go up there and take the milk cans all over the village. That used to be quite a chore for little boys to do. In a little wagon we'd take over maybe a dozen milk cans for different people. Two quarts cans, with the change in it and sit in the kitchen while Alice Lobdell poured milk out into the cans. This was before the days when we had to have everything pasteurized. It wasn't very sanitary but I guess we grew up all right. Well there's another house, since we're talking about houses, another house across the way right underneath the dam, that's on the New York City water supply property. Do you remember whether that house, was that house moved there, do you know, or?

GS: That's the house that's torn down now.

TP: No, that used to be the office, that used to be the office, the one that was right across from the Saunders nursing home.

GS: That belonged to New York City.

TP: New York City. The one over there that the Coulliers lived in.

GS: I don't know much about that

TP: That house belonged to the City and I know that the Couliers lived there. And Mrs. Coulier as you told me earlier was a Stocum

GS: I wonder if the Stocums lived there and the New York City took that property. I wonder.

TP: It's quite possible.

GS: It's possible

TP: That the Stocums lived there and that they took the property

GS: I wouldn't be surprised.

TP: That's a lovely house.

GS: Yes, I know it is

TP: Very nice house. And then there is the office that they had which was a City office. Mr. Coullier of course was the resident engineer, I believe, for the water system and was there at the time the dam was built. And of course that dam dates back before your time, I'm sure.

GS: I don't remember that at all. I remember there was an old Frenchman and we used to call him Frenchie. I don't what his name was and he boarded with Ms Mahoney. And one day somebody came along and said, "Frenchie, do you know Gertrude Smith?" And he said, "Sure, I know her. I knew when she wasn't here at all." [laughter] I must have been very small.

TP: Well, I remember Frenchie. He used to carry the mail. And he used to live in the back room of Mr. Minor's store at one time.

GS: Yes.

TP: He used to drive an old horse for Mr. Minor and used to carry the mail, up and down from the railroad station, for Mr. Minor.

GS: I guess it was, not Frenchie, I guess it was a man by the name of ??Demerexy? lived with the Mahoney's for a while. He worked on the water supply. And I guess Frenchie lived, as you say, lived back there.

TP: Now, I had an interview with Mrs. Sweeney, Mrs. Raymond Sweeney, not Raymond, Jack Sweeney, Mrs. Jack Sweeney. Ella Sweeney

GS: Oh, Ella

TP: I had an interview with her and her husband worked on the reservoir. Jack Sweeney did.

Break in tape

GS: After you come up the crisp? of the hill which is right opposite the dam.

TP: That's up the hill. The first house after Oak Ridge Road.

GS: That's right. And, Mr. Knapp built that. Then that fella Tustagins lived there for a while and then they sold it to the Fields

TP: Wasn't it the Costikyans?

GS: Costikyan. That's it, Costikyan.

TP: Tosstigans? lived up in Bogtown.

GS: That's right. Tosstigans were up in there. This is Costikyans

TP: Now you mentioned R D Knapp. Could you tell me a little about him. You remember he was connected with the schools.

GS: Yes, he instituted the superintendent of school program. And he had a hard job, too. He worked very hard. He used to go night after night way over to Cortlandt and to bring those small schools together, a central school, and his.

TP: He was instrumental, was he not, in having our school district centralized. That, and that was about 1927, wasn't it?

GS: Yes.

TP: 1927. It was the first centralized school district in the State of New York.

GS: This school was built down here in 1925.

TP: The one at Purdys. Then it must have been before 1927.

GS: Then it must have been.

TP: It must have been in 24 or something.

GS: I'm pretty sure it's 25, yes. Before that, before he moved up here from Katonah he owned and operated the printing office in Katonah.

TP: Mr. Knapp did.

GS: Yes, and the paper was known as the *Katonah Record*.

TP: Oh, yes, we used to get the *Katonah Record*, I remember that very well, and that was long before the *Patent Trader*.

GS: Oh, yes, oh yes, that was before it came up here.

TP: Then we had the *Katonah*, the Mt. Kisco paper, and I think they all combined into the *Patent Trader* later on. But Mr. Knapp built this house and then sold it to the Costikyans and they sold it, I believe, to the Fields.

GS: Robert Field, yes

TP: And he has worked there, lived there rather, every since then. Then there's the house next to that, that you mentioned, going on toward Salem.

GS: Yes, my brother built that.

TP: Your brother Uel.

GS: Uel built that house. And then he sold it.

TP: Did he live there?

GS: For a while, yes, I remember one New Year's Eve, I'll never forgot it, we had a party and he had a little white fox terrier. And he and a friend of mine fed the fox terrier punch and the poor little dog went to sleep and didn't awake until the next day about 5 o'clock. I remember that well. [laughter]

TP: Must have been like the people that built the MacPhail house.

GS: Poor little dog he just lapped it up you know and they sit there laughing and this friend of mine and Uel, they let him do it. They feed him saucers of it. Poor little thing. And then he sold that to the Arch.

TP: Arch, oh, The Arch.

GS: Before that it was a man who ran a travel agency in Brewster, I can't think of his name. He bought it. Then that was sold to Arch. I think the Arch. Oh, they did a lot.

TP: I remember seeing in there

GS: Oh, yes. It's really a lovely house now. And they sold it to these people.

TP: I can't think of it either but I'm sure who ever transcribes this will put it in.

GS: Was it Mahoney?

TP: Maloney. No, it's close. [pause in tape] I've come up with the name Mooney, I'm sure that's correct.²

GS: Okay

TP: Now going on down the road beyond the Mooney's house is the next house the Engelhardt house?

GS: No Stairs?

TP: Oh, yes, Stairs?

GS: He built that house. I believe so, I think he did. Pretty sure he did.

TP: Who is it that owns it now.

GS: Dr. David Chafin, David Chafin house. [s/b Chalfin]

TP: That's the house between the Mooney house and the Engelhardt house.

GS: And the Engelhardt house. And the Engelhardt house was owned by the Reynolds family and that house was over in the bed of the Titicus lake.

TP: It was, was it?

GS: It moved. Yes.

TP: Well the road not where it is now in front of the Engelhardt house. It was down

GS: Oh, farther to the left.

TP: Way down in the lake at that time. So that road is really a new road from down there starting by Oak Ridge Road on up, halfway up the reservoir. It's our mill?? You say this was a Reynolds house.

GS: Yes

TP: And they moved that up to where it is.

GS: Yes, that's right.

TP: And I remember, many, many years ago as a youngster going walking and hunting up in back of that property and there's a big quarry place, that's up not very far from where we are now.

²Mooney is correct and after that to Schoenberg to Rosen to Casserley to Korman to Hong (2014)

GS: On the other side of it. We used to call it Jenkins Hill

TP: Jenkins Hill, that's right. Jenkins Hill. And I used to walk up there and that quarry was where they got a lot of stone for the, for the building of the dam. And they had a little railroad that went up in there. I remember seeing the ground work, you know, the grading for the little railroad that would go up to that quarry. And they'd load the stones on and they could run down the hill by their own force and pull up the empty cars. And then they'd load stones on and then they'd run down and pull up the empty cars again. They kept doing that. Without any locomotive or anything they'd run the stones down the hill and the empty cars, I mean on the loaded cars, and pull up the empty cars.

GS: I used to love to walk over there. On Sunday afternoon in those days you didn't have much to do, these days though. We used to walk up there and you know my brother 's dog, a collie dog, got stranded on the rocks up there on the quarry. I don't know how that fellow ever went up there and he climbed down those rocks halfway down that quarry and got that dog. xxx throw ropes down and got it, no sir, or else he climbed up, I don't know which he did but the dog couldn't go up or down. Now how he got that dog off there I don't know, but he did. He carried that dog.

TP: Very interesting. I remember that dog very well.

GS: Collie.

TP: I remember Collie, and if I tell you this story maybe you'll remember it. You may have forgotten but you used to give me piano lessons at one time.

GS: I guess xxxxx

TP: And you did give me piano lessons. And we had a big parlor in the house my family bought from the Fergusons and then enlarged somewhat. And this was a big parlor and it had hardwood floors that were waxed and had a little scattered rugs on it. And this was a room that was apparently very rarely used except for funerals or weddings or something like that. But in there was this grand piano that we had. Or it was a baby grand or on that order. Our dog, that was a shephard dog, Colin by name, he used to like to sleep in there in the hot summer days lying underneath the piano which was nice and cool in there. Well one day when you came over to give me piano lessons, the dog, your dog Collie followed you over and you didn't notice Collie when you came in. When you came in and opened the screen door and walked in. And the dog followed you right in.

GS: I don't remember that

TP: And my dog that was underneath the piano, jumped to life and took off right after Collie and the rugs went flying in every direction. We saw more rugs over Collie, my dog, we finally got them separated. But, I'll never forget that.

GS: I don't remember that. Well, you know, when Uel got a dog, my father must have told him 'no' he didn't want any dog around. So, I don't know how he saw any advertisement

but he wrote, to Kentucky, and he sent \$5 for the dog. And my father used to pay those kids for everything they did and then they had to buy their clothes with the money, I suppose it wasn't long. And they'd save their money and they used to count it nights. And so he got the dog. And Will Gardner sent a card and said 'you got a dog down here.' And my father said 'got a dog down here?' My brother never said a word. He was only a little kid. So he goes down and gets his dog.

TP: Now you mentioned Will Gardner. Nobody else, I know who Will Gardner was but nobody else would that might be listening to this tape.

GS: He was the station agent.

TP: He was the station agent along with Jim Day,

GS: Yes.

TP: For years and years and years down there. And when you said they had a dog down there you meant down at the railroad station.

GS: Yes.

TP: And by the time this is typed up we'll be long since departed.

GS: Oh, yes. This man. My brother wrote the man and asked him just what kind of a dog it was. And he wrote back and he said he's part collie and shepherd. The shepherd in him is as big as the shepherd of our nation, Theodore Roosevelt. I remember that.

TP: That's very, very interesting. We've talked here for quite a while now about various things in the community such as houses and places. I'd like very much to have you tell me a little bit about yourself. It might be confusing to some of the people that I'm interviewing a Mrs. Smith who was the, who is the daughter of Mr. Sam Smith. Could you explain that please and tell me a little bit about your self and your interests and what you've done?

GS: Well, the explanation of that is I married a Smith, so I didn't have to change my name. No relation in any way, shape or matter. No, relative, distant relative, at all. Well, I

TP: Now, what was his first name?

GS: Lewis

TP: Lewis. Where was he from?

GS: Lincolndale.

TP: He came from Lincolndale.

GS: Lincolndale. Yes, he came from Lincolndale. And, but before that, I graduated from Katonah High School and I didn't want to go to college. So, I finally, I did like music, so I went to New York and graduated from the Conservatory of Musical Art there. And that is when I began to teach music which I never was too crazy about. Children wouldn't practice enough to suit me. And I did that for quite a few years. Well, later years it became necessary for me to do more than just teach music. The income wasn't enough from that. So I built up an insurance and real estate business.

TP: How long have you been active in that, real estate and insurance.

GS: Since 1941. And now I sold my insurance business and while I hold my real estate license I might be what you call retired. And I've always liked music, so it just seemed xxx in churches. After Mrs. White, Mrs. Robert White was the organist down there. And for a very short time I played the organ at the Episcopal Church. And Ruth Knapp took the piano at time down here.

TP: That was R. D. Knapp

GS: xxxxShe did it for a while and then. Oh, I don't think it was more than three or four years, then I came back. And I have been there ever since. I don't believe I missed a Sunday in over 55 years.

TP: You have, you played the organ there for 55 years.

GS: Yes.

TP: My goodness. That is a record. That is a record.

GS: Yes, every Sunday. Well, last fall I broke my wrist, so for three and a half months June Tompkins took it from me. June was the organist, she had just agreed to play the organ at the Presbyterian Church and I think she played one week up there when I fell and broke my wrist so she came down here for three and a half months. And Ruth Ahearn stepped in up there and played for June.

TP: Well that's interesting to me. I know Ruth Ahearn quite well. But she plays the organ; I never realize that.

GS: She does. But she didn't want to keep on doing it. So, June, June really likes it. June is a nice little girl and her brother brought her up. Her father and mother died when she was very, very young and she had a little music.

TP: What relation is she to Earl?

GS: None.

TP: None

GS: And she's none to xxx or xxx Lena

TP: No

GS: No she isn't. She grad from West Conn, not a BA, what's the next thing?

TP: MA?

GS: Masters, yes.

TP: Masters of Arts

GS: And she didn't know too much, she knew a little bit about music and her brother wanted to know if I'd help her. And I thought alright. So we used to go over to the Church in North Salem. And for two years I helped her and just pounded the time right in her head. I used to count and pound my hand and count to get that girl so she could keep time because she never had much music. But she come a long ways and practices very, very hard and she's down here in the Presbyterian Church. So I broke my arm the 30th of October and I went back to play the middle of February down here at this church. And I've been there every Sunday since.

TP: Well that is certainly a record to play there for 55 years.

GS: That's right.

TP: Well, I.

GS: Will, I think it's actually longer than that to tell the truth. I'll be eighty years old next winter.

TP: Well that is a surprise to me. I never realized that.

GS: Nobody else does. I don't feel any different.

TP: Well, I think that is

GS: I think that I was only about 18 or 19 when I, I tell you 54 years ago I played for Mildred Minor's wedding. More than that because, yes, for 55 years ago. I was playing in the church by then, I was playing from the time I was about 18.

TP: My goodness.

GS: More than 55 years.

TP: Now you mentioned that you lived in that parsonage.

GS: I did. For eleven years we lived there and then we built this house up here.

TP: You built the house.

GS: It's a nice place but it was, I was glad when I had a chance to get this because it was quite a big house and there's a separate two-car garage. Here the garage is attached.

TP: Now you lived here for how long.

GS: It would be, I think it's seven years this next winter. I think it's six and a half years I've lived here.

TP: Now, just so a person would be able to identify this house. This is the second house on the left going up Crosby Road. And the other house was up almost at the end of the road.

GS: Yes, about a thousand feet in.

TP: Up further.

GS: Yes, that was a big house. It really was a lovely home. And, but, it was just, when I had the opportunity.

TP: Well, this is certainly a lovely house.

GS: Well, you see, how I got this so quickly. Mrs. Zohbel passed away very suddenly one night. Her brother was Frank Crave who lived over in Salem Acres and he called me. Well, right when he called me that his sister had passed away. Anybody passes away you don't say 'I'd like to buy the house.' I didn't say anything. So I came down to see him just as a neighborly gesture. And he said, "Well, it's your baby. You sell it." And I said 'Well, Mr. Crave, I think you've got the buyer right here.' He said, "Is that right." And I said, "Yes." So, the nephew handled the estate, his nephew. So, in due time when we were able to sell it, I put a substantial binder on it and then I put my house on the market on a Friday afternoon and sold it Sunday.

TP: Now does Mr. Schultz still live up on top of the hill? He used to raise turkeys.

GS: Yes he still does.

TP: Does he raise turkeys up there still?

GS: Yes. His son.

TP: He's raised turkeys up there for a great many years.

GS: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. And his son bought, he and his son bought a place in Dover Plains. And he runs a very scientific farm up there. I don't know how scientific this is, but I see trucks go up and get a lot of turkeys. And, so he has run that for a long time.

TP: Well, thank you very much for spending so much time talking to me this afternoon. And

I appreciate it very much indeed.

GS: Well, it was my pleasure. Now the whole world knows how old I am now.

TP: We'll leave that up to...I'd be proud of it if I were you.

GS: Somebody said to me, "You've got the wrong birthday. You were never born in 1895, it's wrong."

TP: Well, it's hard for me to believe, certainly.

GS: And I said well I remember when you came along. You know Lena that took care of you.

TP: Well, I remember Lena. Yes.

GS: ??Lena

TP: Lena wouldn't let me walk until I was about three years old. She used to carry me around on her back because

GS: That's right.

TP: Because she was afraid I'd get bow-legged if I walked 'til I had really sturdy legs.

GS: Oh, I bet. I remember that

TP: She was a great person. She would really go to the bat for me.

GS: She was. She was very loyal.

TP: I remember mother said it was hard for her to keep a cook in the house because Lena would fight with them so over preparing my meals.

GS: Oh yes she took that very seriously.

TP: Well, we'll call it a day on this and thanks ever much. I appreciate it.

That ends the interview with Mrs. Gertrude Virginia Smith. That took place in July 1974.