AN INTERVIEW

WITH

CLIFFORD F. (PETE) MOSE

BY

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OF

SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND

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Pete: Clifford F. Mose, born in Sharpsburg, Maryland, August 29, 1903. Attended the grade school there until 15 years of age, and left to get employment with my father on the canal. In the meantime, worked on the canal until I was 18 years old and during the World War I had to take the place of my brother on the canal, who went off to war.

Walt: You said there were 13 children in your family.

Pete: I was one of 13 in the family

Walt: You said you worked on the canal until you were 18 years old.

Pete: Worked on the canal until I was 18 years old.

Walt: Then you said your older brother was called to war.

Pete: My older brother was called to war, and I worked on the canal until in the early 20's and then I seeked employment at the stone quarry, which was a desire of mine when I passed it on the canal. I witnessed a lot of things on the canal, seen a lot of things on the canal. The locks, the carpenters shops that maintained the canal, and the tunnel at Paw Paw is a mile long. And the great scenery that I enjoyed very much. Upon retiring from the canal, I seeked other employment. And I went to work at the Standard Limestone Quarry, that's wrong, I went to work at the Pittsburgh Limestone Quarry, for a period of 4 or 5 years there, then seeked employment otherwise. And I went to, during the depression, work was very hard to get, wasn't too much work around, picked up odd jobs with farmers, and helped to build fence on the Antietam battlefield, painted tablets on the Antietam battlefield, built pavements, helped to build pavement to McKinley monument and Burnside bridge, cleaned up the banks of the Antietam River, until cold weather set in. Then I secured a job at the Standard Lime and Stone Company at Millville, West Virginia, and had employment there for 33 years until my retirement.

Walt: Now how long was the canal and where did it run from and to.

Pete: It was a 184 miles long, I just can't remember how many locks, I think 75, and I can't think of all the levels and can't name them, used to, but I can't now. And....

Walt: Where did you start the run.

Pete: I started from Washington, D.C., to Cumberland, Maryland and they hauled coal, the canal boats hauled coal approximately 85 or 90 of them while I was on the canal there. And there was 4 to 5 miles to a boat, 2 to 3 or 4 or more men just

depends upon the size of your family at times we would bring stuff from Washington, fertilizer and such stuff to the farmers that would serve them along the canal and we cut wood along the canal for our winter needs and....

Walt: How exactly was the canal built?

Pete: The canal was built back in the 1800's, in the middle of the 18's I would say, I just don't know exactly, But it was hand dug by horses, carts and men and the tunnel was handworked for 1 mile long from all arch brick and the walkway from one end to the other. You'd have to come to the end of the tunnel and see if anybody was in there and if anybody was in there you'd have to wait 'til he got through, and it was the same way both ways. Up above and down below, We had wonderful water along the canal, plenty of springs, plenty of.... I done already had scenery in there. My brother and I, we run a boat in the last two years by ourselves when our father decided to discontinue boating. In a few years, I think in '23 the canal was washed out several times and they failed to resume operations on it and it was gone into a historical canal.

Walt: How did the locks work?

Pete: The locks on the canal was operated by manpower. A boat coming in from Washington on another level of the canal when the gates was closed, big iron paddles which operated by hand would leave the water from under the boat and move it down to another level farther down the hill. The locks took care of a hill, that's how you raised up the hills and lowered yourself down the hills, as you traveled up and down and the canal levels would average 3 miles, 2 miles, 14 mile levels of Big Pool, we always called it. The locks would run sections, 4, 2, 1, and then there would be a level in between it and another hill would leave you down and then it would change to the 6th and 7th locks, there would be six locks that let you down the hill at one place and seven locks would let you down a little bit bigger hill. And that was getting close to Georgetown where you tied up and you'd get your orders to go the the boats. The boats was built in Cumberland at the boat yard by hand. The lumber was shipped in from foreign places. They was planed, shaped, painted and left into the water, all did by manpower and no machinery. Then they was loaded and started down the canal. The canal locks was built by hand years ago back in....I don't know the name of it. I oughta know the name of it but I don't. It's way over a hundred years old I know. They had carpenter shops along the canal there to maintain it and build their own lock gates, big beams if a lock gate got busted out it would be taken down there, put together and resume operations on the canal. That happened very often.

Walt: How did they fix the boats to keep them from leaking?

Pete: When boats was made they was corked with okum, they called it okum in those days. And then they was pitched and tarred and the last years they were creosoted, preserved the wood. During the World War there was 10 boats built down below Washington somewhere, down in the Carolinas or someplace. There was a shortage of boats on the canal, they needed coal, I can remember them when they put them on the canal. They was on the canal 'til they closed it in '23 when the last washout was and ceased operations. They had washouts on the canal and if we happened to be there we worked on them with drag scoops filling up the break-out in the canal. I seen several boats go out on the canal, one went out at the Williamsport Acqueduct at Williamsport, Maryland, one went out this side of Seneca and washed out into the river through a break in the canal. I helped to repair several breaks in the canal. Of course the canal would cease operation when the breaks would come in the canal which was very often. We had beautiful water and nice wide water at places. Up at Big Pool a boat went out through the river and washed down to the bottom, I remember that. And that pool is 2 mile long and I'd say from the widest part would be a mile or better long, wide. Then you came to the four locks where we went down to the other levels.

Walt: Did you ever get washed over the side or ever fall off the ide of the boat?

Pete: No, the only time I fell overboard was when I jumped across the flume and reached me to the upper level and I hit a building and fell in. My brother got me out quick. That's the only time I ever fell overboard. I had some near chances though. You changed the teams, the teams ordinary would go by mileage or you'd put a team in a boat and feed it and tend to it. Rub it down and that's one thing you did was take care of your team. That was the main work for the teams, they'd pull your boat and you would feed them. And then we'd come to the lock and it was time within probably an hour, to change teams. You'd put the working team in the boat at the lock and put the fresh team out on the canal towpath to go on and work, and I'd say that would be sometimes between oh, maybe ten, twelve or fourteen miles, this is as they come into the boats. Now, fourteen miles over to Big Pool, that team went all the way, tracked it all the way. It wasn' so dad hard to pull, if the water was wide enough. The wider the canal was the easier the boat pulled. You had a chance for the water to spread. But in a narrow place the boat pulled real hard because the water couldn't get back fast enough. You were shovin' water ahead of you.

Walt: How many days did it take you to go from Cumberland to Georgetown?

Pete: Approximate time when you leave Cumberland after you load at ordinary traveling, hours was any time after 4 o'clock in the morning to 10 or 11 at night. It all depends on you, how far you wanted to go, and you always tried to aim to get to a certain place where the other boats could pass

you. And you had a nice place for your team to get back off the canal and stay off. You always aimed to get them kind of places. And they taken, you was always up in the morning. In the cool of the morning is the best part of the day. And the cool of the evening was a good part of the day, for the team. We looked after the team more than we did the men. They was always taken care of for that was what we had to depend on to take us up and down the canal, so they would be in shape when you called on them.

Walt: During the depression you said you had plenty of food but jobs were scarce.

Pete: After the closing of the canal, work got real bad, times got real bad. We worked where ever we could work. We picked up a dollar where we could pick up a dollar. But we always had a wonderful garden. We could thank the good Lord for that. We worked the garden hard and mostly all the time with the family that we had we had plenty of food in the cellar, canned food and we always had about 3 or 4 nice big hogs to kill in the Fall to carry us over the winter. We never wanted no food. But we never had no work in the winter, that would amount to anything, but cutting wood. We'd go in the mountain early in the winter when the canal froze , any pretty days we could get, we went over to the canal and got and cut wood. My father would stay off the canal the next summer and haul it home. You'd prepare it and you'd sell it. Stove wood - we cut sometimes if we had a pretty early Spring if the weather was good. Same way with the fall, we'd cut 25 or 40 cords and dispose of it in the summer by people using wood stoves to cook on. We didn't have no electric stoves, didn't burn no coal through the summer and I can remember the first electricity coming to Sharpsburg. I can remember - I can't remember the first couple of cars coming to Sharpsburg. I was too young. I don't know what year they came there, but I do remember, there weren't many cars in Sharpsburg at that time. Times went on and they became more popular. And we - I can remember the older people sitting down on a sack of straw and knapping stones for to make a road with knapping hammers. Three sized knapping hammers. The first one was a big one you broke the big stone with, then you got to the middle size one you broke the small stone. I had them but they got away. And I can remember the first concrete that came to Sharpsburg pavement. I can remember that. I was going to school, very small and then from then on I can't tell you when the roads was built. It seems to me we was going to Williamsport one time they was building a piece of road between here and Williamsport. If I'm not mistaken it was a piece of ore bound road. They was experimenting on a piece of ore bound road, I'm sure of that. It was the first ore bound road ever built in Washington County. I helped build fence on the Antietam battlefield. Twenty miles at least because the battlefield is ten miles long, and we fenced both sides of it.

Walt: You said you did some work around Burnside Bridge too.

Pete: Yeah, I worked on the McKinley monument. The walkway from

Burnside Bridge to McKinley Monument. I remember putting that in. Then the Burnside Bridge was still in operation, see they've closed that now. You go up on that hill before you get to it and you look over it. You look straight ahead that was a monument setting down over the hill there. There's a big walk down there to the Burnside Bridge that's how they got to the McKinley Monument, before that it was just a path. Down that hillside there, it was there for years and years.

Walt: You said that Bloody Lane, the one that's up there isn't the actual one?

Pete: Bloody Lane ain't actually the roadway. Bloody Lane comes down to where the museum is. You by-pass it on the Sharpsburg Pike. It's a mile from there. It went by the Dunkard Church. There's a road that branches off to your right. My Grandaddy told me that. See that was the biggest battle, that was ever fought in one day. I forget how many thousands of troops was killed. And the water run down through that barn there and it come down Sharpsburg Pike before you get to Antietam Creek bridge. It went down through that hollow there, see water runs downhill. My Grandaddy told me that they used them as breast works (dead confederate soldiers). They just piled them on top of one another and got behind them. You had to reload every time you shot. They didn't go bang, bang, bang you know. They had to put a cap in there and ram it and some powder and a punkin ball (pumpkin) a round ball and then they put wads in it and that's what kills you. They had to be pretty good shots in them days. I wish I had one of them books that that old fellow used to sell on Antietam. He was a boy and sat on top of that mountain over there and witnessed a lot of the battle. The townspeople retreated to the top of that mountain. There are a couple of houses in town that have cannon ball holes in them. There is an old cave back up in that mountain carved out by nature and they say if you went far enough back in there you could hear the people working in the farmhouse above you.

Walt: You said you dug up three soldiers skeletons over in the East Woods.

Pete: They was from Ohio on Mansfield Avenue. There was a pretty good battle down in there. We was small kids when they took us out there. A couple of men went with us, they had a map, somebody had give it to them, and they picked out where they wanted. I guess we dug a place about half as big as this house. They were all 3 of them laying there together. They weren't buried very deep. I guess the dogs did eat a lot of them up back in those days. Maybe a foot or 18" under ground. They buried them in graves like trenches. They was mortifying. They'd cease fire for an hour or two so they could take care of their dead and wounded. They done it back in them days you know.

Walt: What about John Brown?

Pete: He was over on the East Mountain where I was telling you about

that boy seeing the battle. They claimed he trained his men and hardened them over there. Up in the mountains burning coke and stuff as that you know. I didn't see it I know, but I always heard that. He came up from Virginia, I don't know where he crossed at though.

Walt: You said you used to get buckets of bullets from the battlefield when it rained.

Pete: My God, I had a couple thousand of them. If you just happened to walk out in the field after a rain you could get two pockets full. They would plow them up with the plows. I went through after the corn come up, and picked up pocketsfull of them. Used them for sinkers (fishing). They bring a dollar or a dollar and a half now.

Walt: How about your hunting experiences?

Pete: We'd hunt sometimes along the canal. Fish whenever we had the opportunity. That canal was a great fish breeder. You'd cast your line out off the back of the boat and in a half hours time you would have 8 or 10 bass there next to you. Had some good dog and coon fights. Sometimes you had to part em. Sometimes the coon would get the best part of a dog. Your dogs you didn't want to get hurt too much. We was fishing in the Antietam Creek from Burnside Bridge up to Porterstown bridge and the water was clear and it was early in the evening and we was hanging out bobs, hanging them on the trees, and we came across a place where there was hundreds of old muskets in the Creek, of course the stocks was rotted off them. It looked like when they collected them up off the battlefield they just drew a horse and cart up to the Creek and dumped them in. None of that stuff was important to us then, we didn't know the time was coming that they would be valuable. Whenever you ran short of fishing sinkers you went out and collected some bullets. We used to find a lot of bayonets but people bought them all up now. If I'd known what I know now I would have kept them because they would be worth a pile of money. They used to mold coffee mills and corn crackers by hand and they are valuable now because there aren't too many of them around now. Old time plows are bringing in big prices now because nobody is using them anymore. I've seen a plow forged by hand, they didn't have machines, then a smart man came along and made a machine to do the work. Most of the farmers did their own blacksmith work. When a barn was built all the neighbors would come around and help raise it.... volunteers, you got a lot of volunteer work back in them days. Now you pay for everything. They put them together with iron pins. They built houses for each other. A lot of the houses were made out of canan boat planks. Our home was built from logs sawed right across the river over here. My uncle on my daddy's side he dug the foundation by himself by hand. They didn't have no back hoes, you wouldn't move into it until the next summer. To chink between the wood they would use clay and lime. That was called chinkin' and daubing. And to fill in where the chinkin' fell out they used sand and cement now. They built big fireplaces in some of these places. Built it out of stone and a big timber would go across the top for your mantle.

piece. It wasn't made at a factory it was a timber you cut yourself. It was interesting back in them days. Everything is done quick now, you have to have pretty good eyes to see the work done now.

Walt: What do you think the main differences would be now for a young person growing up as opposed to when you grew up?

Pete: When I grew up, I came from a large family and we had to work. That's the reason I didn't get the education that you got. The last couple in my family got a high school education. They didn't and I didn't do the work that my older brothers did. It started tapering off and everything started getting more modern. I know that people don't know what things I was telling, like chinkin' and daubin' a house, they would know that they've never seen it. Now your Daddy probably never drove a nail, he works in a bank, that's the difference. Now back there we cut wood, we planted posts, we built fence. These people wouldn't know how to build fence the way we done it. See you're in the city. If you tell them some of the stuff I am telling you they would stare at you, they wouldn't know. They couldn't get it in their minds, to find out what I was talking about. But I grew up with it. For 69 years now, I can go back fifty years and I would be 19 years old. I've seen them build the streets if the rock didn't break one way you turned it over on the soft side as I always said. I seen all that there. There's a place up here from the house that was drilled by hand. I never drilled by hand but they didn't have air drills or steam drills. Now they have big well drills where you can build a well in a couple of days that is a couple hundred feet. See how modern times is comin' up. Before they couldn't build a well that deep, then they had old churn drills. Up and down, that was slow. Everything is more fast now. Probably you never seen one of them drills. It's improvement. You can't realize what I'm telling you, you'd almost have to see it. You're bringing things up to date like missiles and all that there, spacecraft and airplanes and all. And I tell you another thing I seen down along Conduit Road in Georgetown, the canal runs right along there, on M Street. It brings you down from Cabin John. They had a....I was only a tot but I can remember just as plain as I'm looking at you. Had the automobile with the crank. I know you seen pictures of it. I can't tell you what year it was, only seen it once or twice. I remember when Dr. Garrett had a car, and smmething happened to it. A. mechanic overhauled it and they couldn't run it, on it's own power so they pulled it by horse wearing the bearings in on it. Now you can get a car right out of the factory and drive 60 miles an hour in it. That's the change in the times. I bought a truck one time and the man said I didn't have to grease it but every 6,000 miles but he was wrong I could hardly get in the garage up there it was so doggone tight. It was a slip-up in the factory. Course I never did believe in all the factory said about lubrication. I change my car at 2,000 miles. I can remember when they had the coal oil lights. You had a stepladder and a man went around and filled them. He turned the wicks out in the morning and lit them up at night. They burned all night on poles. When electricity first came to Sharpsburg the houses were all wired on the outside. Then later they put the wiring

up through the garrets and took up the flooring to put it in. Had a box outside with no switch just two fuses in it. Fuse blew out you stuck another one in. If it didn't stay there was something wrong. Now you put all the lights in on circuit. Which is a wonderful thing. Circuit breakers are for safety. That's the best thing that ever happened in the world is safety. Things have changed since the bible days, they built all them stone places and all, they wasn't dumb, they was smart people. They built big stone temples and all that there. There weren't any stone crushers or saw mills in them days. If they wanted wood they used an axe. When railroad ties were made they used a broad axe. It had a crooked handle on it. Look how far they have come in my time, look how they came in the years before I was born. Worlds been standing for thousands of years you know. Now they have cranes to lift stuff up in the air, and you can load a truck in Hagerstown and be down in South Carolina tonight.

Walt: How about stills?

Pete: Well, back in the days when I used to night hunt, we generally hunted around streams, Antietam Creek was a great place to hunt. C & O Canal was a great place to hunt. Wouldn't be nothing for somebody to step out of the bushes and stop you. Wouldn't bother the dogs, they'd stop you. Dogs would be ahead of you. You had to identify yourself. Oh! I know who you are now. Go ahead we got a little camp up here. The still would be made and they had a pot of dough there to seal the cracks in the still. Little drink - yeh! we'll take a little drink. Had a can there, grab a tin cup, take it right out of the still. Sometimes it was a 150 proof, sometimes you had to put a little water in it. We had a piece of mountain land way up on the mountain, the same mountain I told you about the Antietam battlefield. Some of them had them in their homes. Yeh! and they'd catch them. We was cutting wood up on the mountain there one time and it wasn't too far from Sharpsburg. We were working cutting coke for a hearth, we knew there was about 20 barrels of mash up there. We heard all this rumblin' and bangin', choppin'. We just stepped up a little higher there on the mountain. They were over there breaking up the barrels. Breaking it with hatchets. The revenue men. Never bothered us, we were about ready to come down out of the mountain. We were working on my daddy's mountain.land and we heard about a still being up there and the fellow used the same road we used to carry their mash and water up. After it was made you drew it out of the bottom and took a little nip. Man, I'm telling you you'd holler like a hoot owl sometimes when that hit you. We came down out of the mountain one evening and saw a man with a ten gallon keg on his back, he was walking. Daddy would take the team over there and load it up. When we got ready to quit for the evening we'd hook the horse up. We'd run across these stills coming down the mountain and side step and be half drunk by the time we got to town.

Walt: What was the school building you went to like?

Pete: When I attended the schools there, we had 2 schoolhouses. They both had 4 rooms in them. We didn't go to grades like they do now. We had an A grade and a B grade. You went 2 years in one room. When you had gone through all 4 rooms you were in the eighth grade. And then you'd go to the larger schoolhouses and they had up to 12 grades and then when you came out of that school you were able to teach school. And later years on you had to have a brush-up in the summer months. And you had no washrooms and bathrooms. You had an outhouse, one for the girls and one for the boys. We had right strict teachers,

I was a utility man for the Standard Lime and Stone Company so when you put it all together I have had outside work practically all my life and upon my retirement 4 years ago this coming February, I've been sitting back taking it easy and hard.