SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS RESEARCH CENTER

The University of North Carolina at Asheville

Interview with Jesse James Bailey April and May, 1972
Tapes 1004.1 and 1004.2 (both sides)
Interviewed by Dr. Louis D. Silveri
Interview with Jesse James Bailey in 1972 in Weaverville, North Carolina
Interviewed by Dr. Louis Silveri

Side 1

Dr. Silveri: 1972 in Weaverville, North Carolina... I wanted to ask you first of all about your family, your background and so on. All your ancestors go back quite a few years in Madison County, don't they?

Jesse James Bailey: Well now, I’ll tell you about that. My grandfather as far as I—me and my daughter—she's done right smart research work on the Bailey family, but so far as we can determine, my Grandfather, James Jefferson Bailey, came into Madison County from Yancey County (that's an adjoining county) a county in which there's worlds and worlds of Baileys. (Just worlds and worlds of them—of Baileys over there.) But my grandfather came to Madison County along about in 1840, between '40 and '45 (somewhere along there). He remained there until he died; he got killed with a train in 1900. He lived on the railroad all his life; they built the railroad through his farm, and he lived right beside the railroad all his life, after the Civil War. He was in the Civil War, of course.

He lived at no other place that I know of, except right there in Madison County. In this section where he had formerly first located, it was on the French Broad River, and they call it Bailey's Bend now after him, but other names were there when they put the railroad through there in 1884. That's a picture of it up there. Now that's not an island; that's a mountain that juts out in the river and makes that horseshoe curve, and that's known as Bailey's Bend!

Dr. Silveri: Is that above Marshall or below Marshall?

Jesse James Bailey: That's this side of Marshall, fifteen miles west of Asheville, five miles east of Marshall. It's more or less an isolated section. Now, you see, before the railroad went through there on the opposite side of the river where the highway is now was an old stagecoach between Asheville and Hot Springs, and there were no railroads in here then, and my grandfather was located in there then. So when the railroad came in, they took the opposite side of the river from the stagecoach line, and that come right along by my grandfather's home and through his property.

He lived there all of his life 'til 1900 and went to Marshall. Then most people—five or ten miles, they just walked. He just walked down this railroad to Marshall. Done a little bit of business there at the court house of some kind; I can't remember now. But anyhow, he started walking back. He got up there at this end of Marshall, and Marshall's just a town of one street. You've never been there, have you?
Dr. Silveri: No, I haven't.
Mr. Bailey: Well, now it's just a town of one street, and river on one side and the mountains on the other, big mountains, too--rock cliffs. At that time in 1900, the telegraph operators were on a strike on this railroad, and my grandfather was a walking up--started home from Marshall. Walked from Marshall back home. He walked down there that morning, and some of the striking operators the night before had cut the wires, planted out on a cliff up there, cut the telegraph wires down. There was a telegraph lineman up there repairing them wires, putting them back together.

My grandfather was walking right along in the middle of the track, and an eastbound freight train came along, and right along where he was walking! He was looking up at that fellow fixing them wires, see, and there was was a milldam on the opposite side, the righthand side--of the railroad, and water kindly cascading... waterfalls, you know, over the milldam, and he couldn't--never heard this train. The train came right up and knocked him off, and killed him! That was in 1900.

Dr. Silveri: You say he fought in the Civil War?
Mr. Bailey: Yes sir.
Dr. Silveri: Was he in very long during the war?
Mr. Bailey: Well, he was--I don't know about that. He wasn't--I mean--we know his Civil War, record kindly, just from hearsay. He was conscripted.
Dr. Silveri: From the Confederacy?
Mr. Bailey: Yeah, by the Confederacy. Then he served his time and was discharged, and the war ended. Come back out, and he was anti-Confederacy from then on. He was mad at them because they conscripted him!
Dr. Silveri: Was your father born in Bailey's Bend?
Mr. Bailey: Yeah, he was born there, and all the rest of the Baileys, this particular Bailey family. I believe there were about five boys and probably the same number of girls.
Dr. Silveri: Did your father do farming then...?inaudible?
Mr. Bailey: Yeah, farmed all of his life. Wasn't no opportunities then much. My father didn't have an extensive education of no kind, just what he could pick up, you know. He actually worked on this railroad that went through there then, was being built then by the State of North Carolina. He worked on it in the '80's, and finally got through to Paint Rock or Hot Springs in 1884.

My father was a young sapling of a boy in them years, and he worked on helping to build this railroad down the river. He also, before the railroad came through, had worked on this stagecoach line which was across the river. They'd cross in a canoe; they had no bridges along back then.
Mr. Bailey: (continued) They'd have to have a maintenance force on it; it was just more or less right in the edge of the river. You can see signs of the old stagecoach road there yet.

Dr. Silveri: Was the French Broad River Valley the only convenient way to get from Western North Carolina into Tennessee?

Mr. Bailey: Well, it seemed to be then. It seemed to be the idea of the people in them days, especially the people who were in power that done these things, seemed to be their idea of following the streams, keep from going, having heavy grades on the highways or railroads or anything. They followed the streams mostly, and for that reason I imagine it went down. I don't know if they could have got a better place. Well, here's a little setup in this transportation. They was a company built a railroad out of Knoxville to the State line down here at Paint Rock. That's about five miles beyond Hot Springs towards Tennessee. That's where we join the state of Tennessee.

This company, they organized it and built it from Knoxville up to Paint Rock. They was going to build it through here to Georgia or somewhere, and they called--they named it--the company was named East Tennessee, Virginia, and Georgia Railroad: ET, V & G. Well, they operated for several years from Knoxville up to Paint Rock or the State line. There was no railroad beyond there eastward, but this railroad was building at the same time out of Salisbury, North Carolina, towards Asheville, and of course, they hit this big mountain over here, Blue Ridge and things, you know, they was, oh, six or seven years a'getting across there.

Dr. Silveri: What was the name of that railroad?

Mr. Bailey: Western North Carolina. It was being built by the State, and it was built by prison labor from the North Carolina Central Prison. They had no equipment at all, but hands: hand drilling, hand shoveling, wheel barrows. They had flocks of these prisoners in there, you know.

Dr. Silveri: Was this before or after the Civil War that they were building?

Mr. Bailey: Well, they started that part of it before the Civil War, but they run into several complications, two or three. The State first started it; then two or three companies took over, and they'd bankrupt and go to pot; and then the Civil War came on. I think they started it, at my best recollection, they started that railroad across the mountain or from Salisbury to Asheville and across into Knoxville. Of course, it was going to tie in or connect at Paint Rock with the ET, V & G. But they got it up as far as Old Fort, that was the foot of the mountain down here. That's twelve miles from Ridgecrest or Black Mountain. They got up there, and they got stranded several times, and two or three companies defaulted and busted.

It lingered on, and then the Civil War come along, and of course, that put a crimp in it for several years--the history of it is, during the Civil War, they tried to operate a little digging and grading and so on, and they had no powder, no explosives to go through them cliffs or rocks.
Mr. Bailey: Now in the distance of twelve miles from the bottom of the mountain up Old Fort up to Ridgecrest which is the top of the mountain and is now the International Eastern Continental Divide Line, but that distance that they had the railroad surveyed, and that they had to build was twelve miles, and it covered only a distance of about three or three and a half miles the way a crow flies! But in that distance now they have and still have and built it back them days, they've got seven tunnels and eleven bridges, and they've got enough curvature in that distance to make four complete circles! That was some doings back them days, you know, building. Trying to build tunnels, dig tunnels with hand labor, hand drilling. Gets back to the old thought of the old steel-driving man called John Henry! He killed himself a' driving steel!

Dr. Silveri: Eventually they got down into Asheville and then along the French Broad, and then they connected it--

Mr. Bailey: When they got to Asheville, they had pretty smooth sailing from there, although they didn't have no tunnels, and they had little bits of strips of land along in the French Broad Valley. It wasn't near--it wasn't nothing like as bad as across the mountain, but I was going to tell you another thing about it which is history of course. I didn't see this.

Now, this line that I spoke of, East Tennessee, Virginia, and Georgia, running out of Knoxville to Paint Rock, and of course this other road that was incompletely across the Blue Ridge, it was running out of Salisbury and from the main line over there, Greensboro and places. It was running out of there to Old Fort over here, and then they--passenger or even merchandise; they handled merchandise, freight and stuff that way by teams from Old Fort to Paint Rock. In other words a passenger would get on a train at Greensboro; he could come to Old Fort on the train. Then he'd get off there and catch a stagecoach to Paint Rock, if he was going to Knoxville and vice versa.

It's a very interesting story that far back, but I got a little ahead of this story. A minute ago I started to tell you about a way back there when explosives, probably during the Civil War and just before, when explosives were so scarce 'til they couldn't get any at all, and couldn't do no good at all over in there in them cliffs without some kind of explosives. The story is, and I think since that was true, they cut timbers. Everything, all the country was a forest then. They cut these timbers and built big long furrows on these cliffs where it had jutted out. Heat them rock red hot, and then take water, barrels of water and throw on there. Water would bust the rock; then they'd quarry it out, punch it out. It was hard going back them days. There's no doubt about that. Then after that they did get through and get all connected up.
Mr. Bailey: One more little story though I want to add into this. In getting this right of way or franchise to run this railroad into Asheville, they had to have a train a'running from Asheville to Black Mountain by a certain date. They had a deadline set. All during the time they was building this road up the mountain, they was also building between here and Black Mountain or Ridgecrest, and their contract called for a train to be a'running by a certain date. They seen they couldn't ever meet that deadline, and the old engineers (I'm talking about Civil engineers now) and the old railroaders conceived the idea of bringing an engine from Old Fort up the mountain. They's three miles air course, you know, little creek there called Swannanoa Creek.

They took oxen: (I forgot how many they took), twelve or fourteen or something. An engine then wasn't no bigger than an automobile is now. They took these oxen and cut off this right of way from Old Fort to Black Mountain or Ridgecrest, two miles beyond Black Mountain. That's the top of the mountain, Ridgecrest is. They drug that engine from--laid down timbers, and took these oxen and drug that engine that three or three and a half mile from Old Fort to Ridgecrest. Then put it on rails here and went to operating it between Asheville and Ridgecrest to fulfill their commitment, and it's very interesting the history of the building of the Western North Carolina railroads. Then after they got it built and completed, why, the State couldn't operate it; somehow or other they didn't. They's always messed up in the legislature or something, and it went into bankruptcy or somehow.

They's a company out of Richmond called Richmond & Danville. They took it over and operated it from along about in the '80's we'll say to 1894. Then the Southern Railway organized. They had some little lines here, there, and the other, and they organized them all together. They got that railroad away from the State, I believe, from the Richmond & Danville. Richmond & Danville had it. They went into bankruptcy; Southern got it from Richmond & Danville.

Dr. Silveri: About what year was that?
Mr. Bailey: 1894.
Dr. Silveri: 1894, Southern Railway--
Mr. Bailey: That's when they organized; when they put these several little pieces of railroad they had at different places together, and then from there on they started.

Dr. Silveri: Let's get back to Jesse James Bailey. When were you born?
Mr. Bailey: I was born June 14, 1888!
Dr. Silveri: 1888? So that makes you--
Mr. Bailey: That wasn't yesterday!
Dr. Silveri: How old does that make you right now?
Mr. Bailey: That makes me right now eighty three point twelve! No! Let's see, I'll be eighty four in June.
Dr. Silveri: June 14th.
Mr. Bailey: Yeah, the 14th of June.
Dr. Silveri: And you were born in Bailey's Bend?
Mr. Bailey: I was born in Bailey's Bend, and now the reason for me being named Jesse James, or at least that's what my people tells me; Jesse James wasn't too well known... [inaudible]. But my Grandfather Bailey was named James Jefferson Bailey, and they named the "James" part after him, and my grandfather on my mother's side whose name was Jesse Hensley, they'd both read Jesse James! I've had lots of fun out of that; I've never objected to it! Of course, back even when I was a young fellow I didn't know too much about Jesse James, what he really was or what he was.

Dr. Silveri: You mentioned your mother. What was her maiden name again?
Mr. Bailey: Her maiden name was Hensley: H-e-n-s-l-e-y. Hensley.
Dr. Silveri: Very common name in the mountains?
Mr. Bailey: Yeah. Sarah Cordelia Hensley. Her father was named Jesse Hensley, came from Flag Pond, just across the North Carolina line, over. Flag Pond, Tennessee. Same place as this fellow John Q. Tilson came from. Of course he fought in the Union Army; he went with the Tennessee crowds. Most all of these Madison County people went in and served; they were pro-Unionists. They was extremely--they had really got so bad over there and bitter in Madison over the thing until the Confederacy went over there and had a massacre, and killed thirteen at one time!

But anyhow they was right along the Tennessee line. East Tennessee has always been strongly pro-Unionist, and they took their crowds and left from there, and all these Madison County fellows all along the line just went over with them. That's the reason for Madison County having been always up until later years 'til the people got educated a little, always been Republican. I've seen the time even in my day that certain precincts in Madison County that you couldn't get a Democrat for an election official. You know in this state, the State is Democratic, and it's supposed to be two Democrats and one Republican, but I remember the Foster's Creek Township in 1920. I ran for sheriff of that county; they didn't have enough Democrats in that township to hold the election!

Dr. Silveri: Mr. Bailey, let me ask you why you think they were pro-Unionists in Madison County?
Mr. Bailey: Well, they were so near this borderline there of east Tennessee, and east Tennessee, the whole thing was so strong as you'll notice in Wilma Dykeman's books there. They were so strong pro-Unionist 'til they couldn't, the Confederacy couldn't depend on nobody and all like that. I believe that's in her book. Did you read that, or did you?
Dr. Silveri: Well, did the people of Madison County in those days own any slaves in the Civil War days?

Mr. Bailey: No! No, many a section of Madison County, up until recently, I mean let’s say forty or fifty years ago, certain sections of Madison County didn’t allow no colored people in it. And today there’s not over fifteen or twenty colored people inhabitants of Madison County!

Dr. Silveri: Well, I’ve read where the people in Madison County and other counties in western North Carolina felt that they didn’t want to fight a war for the people in the other part of the state who owned slaves, and were pretty well off. Was it that or was it that they had a great dedication to the Union and they didn’t want to see the Union disrupted?

Mr. Bailey: That’s it, I think that they’re strictly pro-Unionists because they didn’t want to secede from the Union. Then they had been in this section not even in Madison County, but even in Buncombe County according to the history they’d been a great hue and cry and ballyhoo for the Union. Everybody, even Buncombe County, was pro-Unionist at that time, and then Vance, who later became governor and general or some big wheel in the army, I don’t know. But he had this by the authority of the governor; the governor promised him—they said—now I don’t know nothing about this, no part of history I don’t reckon records it. They claim that he had about fifteen hundred men ready to go to the Union Army from here, had them all assembled and ready, and the governor made a deal with him that if he’d switch and go to the Confederate Army that they’d make him a general. Now that’s the story; I don’t know.

Dr. Silveri: Let’s get back to Bailey again. Did you have any brothers and sisters?

Mr. Bailey: I have no brothers nor no sisters; I was the only child in the family.

Dr. Silveri: Tell us about your early schooling. You must have gone to the one-room schoolhouse.

Mr. Bailey: Well sir, I stayed in one school. I never went to but about two schools in my life. They were typical country schools. I’ve seen the house of the first school I ever went to. I seen that schoolhouse built in 1894. When they built it, they employed as a one-room teacher in a one-room schoolhouse, and they employed a teacher by the name of John James. It was his first school and my first school, and the first school ever held in that schoolhouse!

So I went there off and on. There were no truancy laws...you could go as you wanted to, if your people wanted you to, and if you didn’t, you didn’t have to. They’d only have, I believe, about three months free schooling. So I went to that school, started in 1894. They got this house done in ‘94, this new schoolhouse, and they named it Pleasant View.
Mr. Bailey: (continued) It's five or six miles from Marshal; it's over in the Sandy Mush section not over too far in the Madison County side from Buncombe County.

Along in the '90's then after '94, my family, my father and mother, moved over across the line into Buncombe County. That forced me to change schools, and I went to this little one-room school over in Buncombe County known as Fairview. The other one was Pleasant View, the first one, and other one was Fairview. Well, of course, three or four months out of the year, you didn't learn much, and I dilly-dallied along in school. We moved back to Madison County. They had no grades at all, and they had what they called readers. First, had a book called a primer; that was the first book you started in. Learned your ABC's. Then, of course, they had to begin with Holmes' First Reader, Second Reader, Third Reader, and Fourth Reader. I quit in 1905; I quit in the Fourth Reader, and I had been all those years from '94 now to 1905 in these two little schools, weaving from one side from Buncombe County to Madison, Madison to Buncombe, and so and so. That's where I quit; that's all the education I had, that Holmes' Fourth Reader.

Dr. Silveri: You mentioned the term was only about three months or so, and the rest of the time you did chores around the farm, I guess?

Mr. Bailey: That's right, yeah. Then even school would turn out them days in the fall of the year. It would start, we'd say in September, and it'd be fodder-pulling time by then or molasses-making time or something. Sometimes they'd dismiss the school for a week for the children to help their parents make molasses or pull fodder or chores around the farm.

Dr. Silveri: Did your father raise any tobacco?

Mr. Bailey: Yes, he raised—now, they had a different kind of tobacco, and that's a long story; that wrecked this country. About 1894 about the time that I was beginning to go to school and learn a little something about the world, why, they came in here with some people, monied people, bought up different tracts of land and things, and went to raising tobacco, what we call now bright-leaf tobacco. It was fire cured. They had to cure it with fire, build barns, and everybody built barns.

My father built barns, and he raised this bright leaf, and heck, it brought a lot of good money then. Twenty-five cents a pound would be equal to about a dollar a pound now. Well, that went on up through to—the country got prosperous, right prosperous. Asheville was a tobacco market for the fire-cured tobacco, better known nowadays as bright leaf. They still raise it down in eastern Carolina; it was a light-yellow, golden-looking, thin tobacco. I reckon they must have made cigarettes out of it; I don't know what they made. But anyhow that tobacco business fell through along about '97 or '98, didn't last too long. The market went down to nothing! Got down—I've seen tobacco sell on the Asheville market at one cent a pound!
Mr. Bailey: (continued) Of course, it wasn't good tobacco, but anyhow, the tobacco business just went to pot. Everybody quit raising tobacco; truth of the matter, got so there wasn't no market there for the bright-leaf tobacco. Farmers then, they just had it tough, went in debt to buy this land; splurged into the tobacco business and building barns! Cost a right smart of money to build a barn to house it, and you had to add flues, they called them. They had them sheet-iron flues that you put inside the barns to generate this heat. You had to fire the thing from the outside, and the fire went on through the barn and hit everything. The whole thing just collapsed!

Dr. Silveri: And your father felt that collapse!

Mr. Bailey: Oh, yes sir! We felt it bad! Fortunately, we wasn't in debt, but the economy was tough and money was scarce. Of course, I remember what was known as the Cleveland Panic. It happened in '94. I've been in panics ever since!

Dr. Silveri: That even hit the mountain people?

Mr. Bailey: Oh law, I've seen my mother and father take, as a matter of economy--force, I won't say economy--I've seen them take rye and parch it like parching coffee. Now back them times, nobody ever seen or knowed anything about ground coffee or instant coffee. All the coffee that came to the merchants and was consumed by anybody, hotels or anybody else, come in grains. (Grained coffee, unparched) I've seen my mother parch coffee a' many a' time; get about four pounds at a time and put it in the stove and parch it, and then grind it. Why, I've seen them, back when it was so tough, get rye, take rye and parch that rye and grind it in a coffee mill. I've got my mother's old coffee mill yet (welp my daughter has). Grind that rye and drink it for coffee. It was a substitute; it was better than nothing!

Dr. Silveri: You raised most of your own food right on the farm, didn't you?

Mr. Bailey: Raised all we got, almost. We owned hogs, owned potatoes, owned--wasn't much wheat raised them days. Of course, there wasn't no thrashing machines. This country's mostly too rough for wheat anyhow. But anyhow, everybody'd raise a little wheat for their own use. Nobody tried to raise any commercially, because you had to cut it with a cradle by hands. I've got one now that's down there in my basement. That was a heck of a job cutting wheat with a cradle! But everybody would raise enough wheat for their own consumption, and nobody then, even the better class of livers, would think about eating any wheat bread or biscuits made out of flour, except for breakfast. Everybody, for the other two meals, would always eat cornbread. Especially at suppertime they'd eat this good corn bread and sweet milk, you know. Everybody in them days had a cow; it was a necessity. You just had to have a cow and have milk or you couldn't raise children or nothing. But you could take that good cornbread, if your mother knew how to make it good, and mine did. Eat that cornbread and that good old sweet milk right out of the springbox! These springs would come out of
Mr. Bailey: (continued) the mountains, solid rock; all this water would come out, and you'd make a box to put your milk and butter and stuff—that was the only method of cooling or refrigerating there was in them days. Nobody ever heard tell of any ice.

Dr. Silveri: You raised a lot of corn?

Mr. Bailey: Yeah, corn. Some of these fellows that had went busted in the tobacco business turned to making liquor legally, legal distilleries. Why, I could count in a radius of three miles around me when I was a boy up until '97 or '98 and along in the 1900's, I could count five distilleries! A fellow by the name of W. D. Redmon had one; that's that big still I've got up here now. That was one of them.

W. D. Redmon, he was our neighbor; he had one. Joe Ballard had one; Elina Martin had one. Edward Worley had one; Sara Freeman had one. All the people that had money enough to go into the liquor business, went into it. Of course, nobody got rich at it. It wasn't enough people to drink it then. Nobody thought anything about drinking a drink of liquor then. Everybody, it was commonplace then, you know. After that, after prohibition came into effect in 1907, that put all the distilleries out of business.

Now as I said in the 1890's there, and that was what was known as the Cleveland Panic. I'll show you in here, I'll just find this old document in here, old papers that I gather up for scrapbook purposes. This is a chattel mortgage. It was given by my Grandfather, James Jefferson Bailey or J. J. Bailey, Sr., I guess you could call him. This shows what it took in them days in 1892 to get twenty-five dollars. It reads like this:

"I, J. J. Bailey of the County of Madison, State of North Carolina, am indebted to Redmon Brothers & Company of Madison County in said state, in the sum of Twenty-five Dollars. For which they hold my note to be due the First day of January 1893, and to secure the payment of same, I do hereby convey to them these articles of personal property to wit: One steer five years old known as the Irving Bailey steer, worth Twenty-five Dollars. Also, my entire crop of tobacco that I am raising, and having raised this year one milk cow. This is the first mortgage or lien on all of this property. But on this special trust that I've failed to pay said debt and interest on or before the First Day of January 1893, then they may sell said property thereof at public auction for cash first giving Twenty days notice at three public places and apply proceeds of such sale to the discharge of said debt and interest on the same, and pay any sur-
plus to me given under my hand and sealed this, the Seventeenth Day of June, 1892.

Witnessed by: T. C. Wilbarrow
Signed by J. J. Bailey (His mark)

Now, that shows you, by Golly, how tight things were them days!

Dr. Silveri: Did he make good on the debt?
Mr. Bailey: Yeah, he paid it! Redeemed his stuff. But I just found that old paper, and I thought it was interesting the difference between twenty-five dollars now and twenty-five dollars then!

Dr. Silveri: At what age did you begin to work elsewhere other than on the farm?
Mr. Bailey: Well, the first public work I done was in 1904; I left my home and my people. I doubt if I'd stayed many nights away from home until I was that age. The fifteenth of December in 1904, I left my home and went out to a place beyond Bristol called Sutherland, Tennessee. They're a big--the Yankees had come in here then and bought up all of this fine, virgin timber and was a'cutting it out, sawmilling. W. M. Ritter Lumber Co. and Tennessee Manufacturing--Lumber Manufacturing Company and various places.

I left here; I was about sixteen years old, I believe then. I went out there to that sawmill, and I started working there at the sawmill. I worked up until the spring of 1905, and I come back home and started to school again, all over again. Then that fall when school closed that fall, why that was the last I ever went to school.

[End of Side I]

[Side II]

Mr. Bailey: They had a big band...sawmill there, and they had this little railroad station there. Depot agent's name was West, W. A. West, friend of mine from up around Marshall and a young man. He needed somebody to stay with him and help him out a little bit, sort of as a station hand. I done that in return for him learning me telegraphy. I learned telegraphy then in the early part of 1906; then I got a job on the Southern, Knoxville Division of the Southern, in 1906 as telegraph operator. I stayed with that until 1920 when I ran for sheriff of Madison County.
Dr. Silveri: Where was your first station?
Mr. Bailey: First work I done was at a little place called Sandy Bottom, that's down—all those stations are gone now and discontinued. Then I worked at a place called Barnard, that's down west of Marshall. I worked all up and down, a kind of an extra hand all up and down the—we know on the Knoxville Division as the River Line, that's the line that runs from here to Morristown right down the river. That was kind of extra work until I got up enough seniority to bid me in a job.

There was a telegraph office at this place called Bailey's Bend, but I didn't have seniority enough to reach that at that time. So, I built up some seniority in 1907; the first of July, 1907, I bid in that secondary job, that's the job where you go on at three in the evening and off at eleven at night. I bid that in at Bailey's Bend. I went on that job the first day of July, 1907, and I never lost a day until the first day of August, 1909, two years and one month. Now that was seven days a week, mind you!

Dr. Silveri: What were you receiving as pay? Do you remember?
Mr. Bailey: When I first went to work in 1906, I got forty-eight dollars a month. They paid you by the month, and I got that much money up until along in 1907. I was getting I think when I did this job then regular, I was getting sixty-dollars a month for seven days a week; no overtime, no nothing!

Dr. Silveri: What was the job of telegrapher? What had you to do?
Mr. Bailey: Well, at these smaller stations, I was in the country then. At that time the Southern Railway had what was known as a manual block system; it wasn't an electric block like it is now. They had these different little stations all the way along that consist mostly of handling the block system for one train from one station to the other. Say I was located at Bailey's Bend, we'll say; there was a train a'coming east. I had to obtain the box manually with over this Morse system from Bailey's Bend to Alexander, which was the next eastbound telegraph office. I'd call the operator up and ask if the block was clear for first number eighty eight and so on and so, and so and so. If there were no trains in the block, she'd generally have a "SD" or a signal distance sign. Then when this train come to my office I'd pull the signal in and give him a clearance to go on as far as Alexander, and the man at Alexander would do like wise, right on up, you know. It was a cumbersome thing!

In 1920, the Southern on the Knoxville Division cut that all out, and put this electric block system in, which changes the boards itself, the signals. Then when I went in as sheriff of Madison County in 1920, I quit—I mean I left the telegraph service and never did go back. I got a leave of absence from the railroad. I just served one term as sheriff of Madison County, didn't stand for re-election because I didn't want to give up my pension. Jobs were better then, you know, the railroad was paying more money and all like that. I just never sought re-election, just come on, and when
Mr. Bailey: (continued) I come back to the railroad on my leave of absence, I went into what we call the Special Service Department; that's the Security end of it. Running down people for any depredation against the railroad: breaking in depots, laying rock on the track, throwing a rock through the train or stealing, breaking in box cars and stealing. Back in them days you had a lot of professional stealing; don't have so much of it now. We had what was known as regular car thieves; they'd break in box cars when you shipped high-class merchandise like automobile tires, cigarettes, and things like that that they could dispose of easily to fences all over ever where, you know, everybody else would buy them.

Dr. Silveri: I wanted to ask you in the years that you were a telegrapher before the first World War. Would you describe what kind of trains came through, the engines and what they were pulling?

Mr. Bailey: Well, the engines then were all steam powered; they were very small engines when I first went to work. A fourteen-inch engine was a big engine; that's what we called six-hundred class. As the railroad strengthened their structures, their roadbeds, their bridges and so on, they got bigger engines and bigger and bigger and bigger. When I left the railroad, we had some engines then, steam engines, a thirty-six inch engine from a fourteen-inch engine that I was used to working. That means now that the cylinder of this engine is thirty-six inches. Pretty big.

Dr. Silveri: Was it mostly freight traffic or passenger traffic that came through?

Mr. Bailey: They had a good deal of both. We had about--on this division that I was on, and that was between Asheville and Knoxville--they had about ten passenger trains a day each way. Then they had freight--coal--coal was the biggest commodity that they hauled them days on the Knoxville Division because that division penetrates the coalmining district down in Middlesboro and all down in there, and they'd run it through here to South Carolina. Probably, I think we used to load coal at Charleston for foreign countries.

Dr. Silveri: So you worked as a telegrapher from 1906 until you ran for sheriff in 1920?

Mr. Bailey: That's right, 1920.

Dr. Silveri: For all those years, you worked seven days a week?

Mr. Bailey: Yeah, seven days a week; that was telegraphers.

Dr. Silveri: Did you have any vacation?

Mr. Bailey: No, vacation unless you got off on your own. I never had a vacation in my life until I got into the other department.

Dr. Silveri: You were a telegrapher when the first World War began, and when we got into the war in 1917, was there a change in the railroad? The government took over the railroad, didn't it?

Mr. Bailey: The government took over the railroads, but they had the same personnel, the same officials, everything, you know. A fellow by the name of
Mr. Bailey: (continued) Williams Gibb McAdoo; he was Federal Railroad Administrator and later married Wilson’s daughter, you remember.

Dr. Silveri: Did you find that the government ran the railroads any better or any worse?

Mr. Bailey: A lot worse. A lot worse. They didn’t know nothing about it. They just like—oh, the railroads when we got them back from the government were worse shape than things actually is now! Oh, they didn’t know nothing about them!

Dr. Silveri: First World War came along, you were still working on the railroad, did you ever get close to getting into the war?

Mr. Bailey: No, not too close. The railroads then kindly had some kind of a setup with the draftboards or with the powers that be, I don’t know who it would be, to exempt or unclassify all of these railroad workers that were in operation of the trains. I didn’t mean the track men, but anybody that had anything to do with operating a train, running a train, giving train orders and things like that, like a telegrapher or dispatcher or trainmaster or anything like that. They were all exempt, I don’t know of anybody. Some of them went because they wanted to; they never forced any of them.

Dr. Silveri: What was the first Presidential election you were able to vote in?

Mr. Bailey: Theodore Roosevelt, 1904. No, that was when he run on the Bull Moose Ticket.

Dr. Silveri: No, that was 1912.

Mr. Bailey: Yeah, that’s the first one.

Dr. Silveri: And who did you vote for in 1912?

Mr. Bailey: I voted for Roosevelt; sorry I done it.

Dr. Silveri: Why?

Mr. Bailey: Well, I don’t like the name Roosevelt. He was a renegade; he come out and split the Republican party ’cause you see if he hadn’t a’come out against Taft—there he was you see, he made Taft. Then come along, you know. Them Roosevelts were vindictive. He came along then, and Taft beat him for the nomination in the convention, and he comes out on this Third Party Ticket. That’s the reason I say. Wallace may never be elected. I’ve seen two or three—I’ve been to two or three elections when they have a third party candidate for president. Now nobody can be elected on a third party ticket, it’s got to be either one of the old line parties.

Dr. Silveri: This was one time when you didn’t vote for the Republican candidate?

Mr. Bailey: Yes.

Dr. Silveri: That’s right; you went for Roosevelt in 1912.

Mr. Bailey: People in them times considered Roosevelt a Republican ’cause he was right up ’til the convention then he comes out—I can see the folly of it now. I wouldn’t vote for him now under the same circumstances!
Dr. Silveri: How about four years later in 1916?
Mr. Bailey: I voted for Hughes.
Dr. Silveri: Hughes?
Mr. Bailey: Yes sir.
Dr. Silveri: And then let's go up to four more years in 1920 when Harding was running--
Mr. Bailey: I voted for every Republican president candidate since then.
Dr. Silveri: I see.
Mr. Bailey: They got beat most of the time. I know Franklin D. got in.

Dr. Silveri: Now let's begin to talk about 1920 and your political career, and 1920 is the year in which you ran for sheriff of Madison County.
Mr. Bailey: That's right. Let me say this, I'm always proud of it. Madison County was an overwhelmingly Republican County in them days, and I received more votes in Madison County in that election than Harding did for President! I lead the ticket!
Dr. Silveri: Can you remember what the vote count was back then?
Mr. Bailey: No.
Dr. Silveri: You got more than Harding.
Mr. Bailey: It wouldn't be as big as it would be now because I run for office before women got the vote!
Dr. Silveri: Right.
Mr. Bailey: I wish they never had got the vote! I'll say this with a lot of humor, you'll get some backfire from it, I'm sure. If the women hadn't ever got the vote, the country would be in a lot better shape than it's in! You can see I just got in too since and the women got the vote! I love them; you can't live without them, and you can't live with them! I wish they had never got the vote!

Dr. Silveri: Why did you run for sheriff of Madison County?
Mr. Bailey: Well, it was little bit of honor and everything. I didn't run for it because my friends begged me to. I had lot of friends that wanted me to run, but you know most politicians say, "I wouldn't have run for this office if my friends hadn't begged me into it!" No friends begged me into it. By Golly, when I went to running, I wanted it! I really wanted it! I could see that old office standing out there, and that big badge and all, looked like a huge strawberry shortcake with a lot of whipped cream on it! This old crowd of politicians that comes out and tell you that they wouldn't have ever run but their friends ever persuaded them and this, that, and the other. That's the biggest lie they ever told in their life!
Dr. Silveri: What was a sheriff receiving as salary in those years?
Mr. Bailey: How's that?
Dr. Silveri: What did the sheriff receive in salary?
Mr. Bailey: Thirty-six hundred dollars a year!
Dr. Silveri: Well, that was a good--
Mr. Bailey: That was a rich man's job them days. I had a life!
Dr. Silveri: How long did your campaign take place? Did the election last long?
Mr. Bailey: I went to campaigning in about three months; took me about that long to ride the county. I rode the county on horseback, all over it. It's big in area, but small in population; so you didn't have too many audiences to talk to, you know. In Madison County, I don't think I ever made any public speeches at all, I mean to public gatherings. I'd just go out in the country and meet the people! Go up and tell a man, "I'm running for sheriff of your county; I want you to vote for me! If you belong to the other party and can't vote for me, get some of your friends to vote for me!"
Dr. Silveri: Who were you running against for sheriff? Was there a major issue?
Mr. Bailey: I was running against a fellow--I was running really and truly in the primary against a fellow that had been sheriff a couple of terms, a fellow by the name of Ramsey. The moonshiners all liked him pretty well; of course, he hadn't ever had any law enforcement. So when I went to running for sheriff, what is known as the dry people--you see that was right at the height of the prohibition era. Prohibition law wasn't passed until 1920, I mean 1918. It had been two years. Well, everybody knew that I didn't drink. Now I'm not a strong prohibitionist, I just don't drink. I never took a drop in my life! But I never criticized anybody for drinking; I've always tended to my own business, and let the fellow that like to drink tend to his. But the dry people, because of the fact that I didn't drink and they knew it, that put them with me against my opponent because he had been sheriff and hadn't enforced the prohibition law.

I went out there into the bushes with/ moonshiners, and I promised them everything. I said, "Now boys, listen; if I get in you fellows needn't have no fear unless I stump my toe over your still, just don't put it out here in the road where I'll find it if I'm going somewhere and stump my toe over it or something." Well, that sounded awful good to them until they studied a minute on it. Then they'd say, "Well, we know what the other man will do, and we don't know what you might do. We'll have to be for him!" And they were; they just beat me to death in those wet districts, but I come out in the dry districts. I'd come out--oh, they can scare you to death, liquor crowd and all violators. They can scare you to death; make a lot more noise than a good law abiding citizen that stays at home and says nothing 'til he goes to vote. By Golly, I'll depend on them anytime!
Dr. Silveri: So you were elected then in the fall of 1920, and would take office at the beginning of the year?
Mr. Bailey: Took office the sixth day of December same year.
Dr. Silveri: Of 1920? And this was for a two-year term?
Mr. Bailey: Yes. Two-year term.
Dr. Silveri: What did your office comprise? You were sheriff and did you have assistants?
Mr. Bailey: I didn't have no paid deputies at all, had two or three little fee deputies. I didn't even have an automobile when I was sheriff of Madison County! Wasn't no good roads; you couldn't go no where much, if you'd had one. I hired a taxi when I'd want to go out where I could go.
Dr. Silveri: You took a leave of absence from your job then?
Mr. Bailey: Yeah.
Dr. Silveri: They let you go for two years?
Mr. Bailey: Yes sir. When I went back to the railroad, they didn't count me off any time off my seniority. They give me time for the time I was off as sheriff of Madison County and Buncombe County. I did the same thing in Buncombe County, but of course I didn't get no pay while I was off. They did let me go back with the same seniority.
Dr. Silveri: Well, those were two very busy years, I can imagine.
Mr. Bailey: Well, Buncombe County now I treated it sort of as a--I knew--see each one of these terms, I knew positively myself, I wouldn't tell everybody this during my service, but I knew positively I wasn't going to run any more, and it helped me a lot. It helps a man a lot in enforcing the law if you're sheriff, to know you ain't going to run no more 'cause you don't have to buy nobody by promising to get them out of jail, and I knew positively I wasn't going to run any more, but I wouldn't tell that up until closer time. But while I was sheriff of Buncombe County, I had a pretty good flock of deputies. I had nine deputies all told, all on a salary, and automobiles and everything, and I let them do the work and I done the talking.
Dr. Silveri: But Madison County was a different thing; it was a different county and so on?
Mr. Bailey: I didn't even have a paid deputy or nothing!
Dr. Silveri: As sheriff you had to work closely with the court, right? Madison had its own county court?
Mr. Bailey: No, no. Superior Court.
Dr. Silveri: Superior Court?
Mr. Bailey: Have a session, say six times a year, and if you arrested a fellow and brought him in, if court was just over, he had to make bond or stay in jail if he couldn't make no bond.
Dr. Silveri: Did you have a jail in Madison County?
Mr. Bailey: Yeah, yes sir, and I've threw a lot of them in there!
Dr. Silveri: There was a county prosecutor, too?
Mr. Bailey: Yeah.
Dr. Silveri: Was he an elected officer?
Mr. Bailey: Yeah, he was elected officer; called him solicitor.
Dr. Silveri: Solicitor? Was the County Solicitor of Madison County in those years you were sheriff a man who was anxious to prosecute the--
Mr. Bailey: Yeah, he was a good prosecutor. He's dead now, a fellow by the name of George M. Pritchard. He was very popular political figure in this section, and later become a Republican Congressman from this district.
Dr. Silveri: How about the judge?
Mr. Bailey: Judges were all Democrats!
Dr. Silveri: All Democrats?
Mr. Bailey: Yeah.
Dr. Silveri: They weren't from Madison County.
Mr. Bailey: No.
Dr. Silveri: They rode the circuit?
Mr. Bailey: Yeah, they're on a circuit.

Dr. Silveri: Do you have any statistics for those two years as far as the number of stills you broke and--?
Mr. Bailey: I can't--I've got some, but I can't put my finger on it at this time. I've got my old jail book where I put the people in, but during that time, I remember distinctly handling fourteen cases of deaths: murder, accidental deaths from automobiles, so forth and so on. That I could contribute directly or indirectly to moonshine liquor! People'd get drunk and get killed in automobile wreck, get killed with a train or something; fighting people'd get to fighting, and get in a big party; and all get drunk, fight and kill one another. I lost one deputy as a result of liquor, you know, still; killed him over this still over here. I investigated fourteen deaths that I could contribute directly and indirectly to moonshine liquor.
Dr. Silveri: How did you go about finding out where stills were?
Mr. Bailey: Well, the dry people were so insistent in those days; they'd had no enforcement of the prohibition law in so long, and they were so insistent till most of them, they'd channel you the information somehow. No officer could do anything without information. You've got to have--if you've just staggered upon a job, it would be a miracle, but I never went to a place many times in my life but what I knew pretty well where I was going or at least I was working out such information that I had had. You get hundreds of letters, a lot of them anonymous, but I'd work out the anonymous ones and sometimes find it just as good as the other and sometimes better. Sometimes I'd find that the information that a good citizen gave me--he didn't know what he was--the trouble is with law-abiding people, people that believes in law enforcement, they don't know what it takes to make evidence! They'll see a little maneuvering around say like my
Mr. Bailey: (continued) neighbor over here, we'll say. Say if it's to decide that my neighbor across the street here was handling liquor. Why, I'd write the sheriff and say that something mysterious was going on over here, and too many people going and coming, automobiles different times of night, and so on and so. Well, now that's all well and good, and that's some evidence. I mean that's something that will help you as a matter of information. But you can't make a case against a man with that! When it comes down to taking him to court and setting him down before twelve men and proving to them men beyond a reasonable doubt, and that's what you've got to do.

Dr. Silveri: Didn't you catch them at the still making liquor?

Mr. Bailey: Not necessarily at the still; you can build a good case circumstantially if you've got, say, if you find the still. If I find a still forty years from the man's house with a pathway right to his house, well beaten and so and so. Then go down to his house; search around the house and find a lot of still mash and stuff like that. You can start from there.

Dr. Silveri: You had, of course, to do a lot of raids on stills when they were in operation?

Mr. Bailey: Oh yeah! I worked out hundreds of pieces of information and never finding a thing; maybe there wasn't anything there to start with, and sometimes, very few times, mouths figures in it. A fellow will get mad at his neighbor, and he'll say "Well, Ole John's a-stilling or a-handling liquor! I'll report him to Ole Sheriff Jesse James!"

Dr. Silveri: Well you crimed a lot of people. Did any of them ever threaten your life, say when they got out of prison?

Mr. Bailey: Oh yeah! By Golly, you know, I've had them to look me right in the eye and call me a bad name, "S. O. B., I'll put you in a wooden overcoat when I get on the ground!" I tell you, I'd always smile. It's hard to do when a man is calling you ugly names. I'd look him right in the face with a big smile, and I'd say, "Listen my friend, you're talking now. When court comes, I'm a-going to talk and you'll be sorry you said those words 'cause I'm going to tell the judge about it!" And I would, usually! Oh, I worked it out; I had a good technique on it.

Dr. Silveri: Were there many that jumped bail and left?

Mr. Bailey: Well, good many, yeah. If they had the money and somewhere to go but they'd usually always come back.

Dr. Silveri: Your authority didn't exist beyond the boundary of the county, right?

Mr. Bailey: No, I couldn't go beyond the boundaries of the county, except a little unique thing that I put in operation myself. I don't know whether it was exactly legal or not. It never was questioned while I was in, and I think the other sheriffs quit it when I went out. I joined the Tennessee Line, three different counties in Tennessee. Unicoi County, Greene County—Unicoi County, the county seat is Erwin; Greene County, the county seat is Greenville, and Cocke County, the county seat is Newport.
Mr. Bailey: Now I joined—I had a boundary line of them three counties so my moonshiners that lived right along and operated right along close to the State line; when I'd get after them, they just run over into Tennessee. Of course, like wise them people over there was having the same trouble (the sheriff was). When he'd get after some of his crowd, they run over and locate in my county, you know. Of course, I was always strong on co-operating with the sheriff catching them.

But anyhow, I inaugurated a new technique, and it never was questioned as long as I was sheriff. I went to see them fellows along the boundary that was having this trouble, their crowd and I was having trouble with my crowd, and I said, "Now boys, I'll tell you what I'll do; I'll make you a Deputy Sheriff from Madison County. You turn around and make me a deputy sheriff of your county!" And I was a deputy sheriff in three Tennessee counties! Them three sheriffs in three Tennessee counties, they was a deputy over in my county! By Golly, we'd come to the state line, and we'd go right on over! It was a lot in the technique, you know! I had a lot of fun being sheriff, yeah!

Dr. Silveri: Were you married by that time?
Mr. Bailey: Married? Yeah, my daughter was eight years old. Yeah, I married in 1911.
Dr. Silveri: You were living in Marshall?
Mr. Bailey: Yeah, I lived in Marshall while I was sheriff. Now I lived up at Bailey's Bend while I was operator.

Dr. Silveri: Well, when the two years were up, did the fellow you defeat come back and run again for sheriff?
Mr. Bailey: No. No, they run a different man.
Dr. Silveri: Was he also a good, dry sheriff?
Mr. Bailey: No, he was sort of a liquor dick!
Dr. Silveri: A Republican, though?
Mr. Bailey: Yes, Republican. He got the nomination; so he got in, but he just held it one term. Some fellow came out and beat him. A fellow by the name of Willard Rector came out and beat him. He just held it one term, and then this fellow Ramsey turned around and come back. Then he held it three or four terms after he come back, and he made sort of a mess of it. That's the first time they ever elected a Democrat. They run a Democrat against him, a fellow by the name of Burnett, and he was the first Democrat sheriff ever elected in Madison County since the Civil War!
Dr. Silveri: When you finished your term in December of 1921—
Mr. Bailey: '22.
Dr. Silveri: '22?
Mr. Bailey: Yeah, I went out in '22.
Dr. Silveri: What did you do then?
Mr. Bailey: I came right straight on up here and went in Southern Railway the next day. I didn't lose no time!
Dr. Silveri: You moved to Buncombe County?
Mr. Bailey: I didn't move my family then, but I came here and went to work as a Special Agent.
Dr. Silveri: Out of Asheville?
Mr. Bailey: Yeah.
Dr. Silveri: Then later on in a short time you moved your family down into Asheville?
Mr. Bailey: Yeah, I moved--I waited until my daughter was out of school at Marshal before I moved up here. I moved up here next spring.
Dr. Silveri: In this house?
Mr. Bailey: No, not in this one. I moved--built me a house over in West Asheville.
Dr. Silveri: Well, then from the years '22 to '28 you worked as a detective on the--
Mr. Bailey: On the Southern.
Dr. Silveri: Southern Railroad, and those were pretty exciting years, too, for you?
Mr. Bailey: Oh yeah, yeah, very fascinating, but I worked. Now during that time from '22, December of '22, that I come up here and went to work, I worked all over here and all over Southern. I worked in Richmond; and I worked in Greensboro, and I worked in Salisbury. It's a job that's sort of floating around on giving me some experience to channel up to the top. I covered lots of territory, Washington; I worked in Washington some on the railroad.
Dr. Silveri: Were there any railroad strikes in those years, you remember?
Mr. Bailey: They had a big one just before that, in 1922. They'd had that first big strike that the Southern ever had in 1922; it was the machinist strike. But they didn't have this system then of--the strikers didn't, the unions didn't, of all the other employees refusing to go over the picket line, just that branch of the service that struck was all that was out. The other people would go on about their work.
Dr. Silveri: And the railroad still ran then?
Mr. Bailey: Yeah.
Dr. Silveri: That was the year you were sheriff of Madison County. Did you have any difficulty up there?
Mr. Bailey: No, no we didn't have mechanical--of course now, we had quite a little bit of trouble with these cars that we had that we couldn't move. We had to set them out on the side track; a lot of them was merchandise cars. I had two places that I protected in Madison County where they'd stored these cars during the strike; some of them set there for two months loaded with high-class merchandise. Had to watch them occasionally to keep people from
Mr. Bailey: (continued) breaking in them, stealing the stuff.
Dr. Silveri: Well in those years in the 20's then, you had to be concerned with any kind of, as you say, depredation of the railroad?
Mr. Bailey: Yeah.
Dr. Silveri: How about the people who would ride the rails? Was that your responsibility, too?
Mr. Bailey: You mean trespassers?
Dr. Silveri: Yeah, tramps and so on.
Mr. Bailey: Yeah. Hobos, we'd call them.
Dr. Silveri: Hobos, yes.
Mr. Bailey: Well, we very seldom fooled with them unless we had nothing else to do. Mostly what we done that for was for their own protection. We'd see a gang of young fellows, say five or six trespassing (hoboing) just riding from one end of the railroad to the other. Train would go up this morning and then come back down home this evening, and we'd run them off mostly. That's a very frivolous misdemeanor, and the maximum penalty in that is only thirty days. Of course, we didn't fool with them much, just to save their own lives, and that was back now in the steam days before it converted to diesel power, and the trains—this river line is a heavy-graded line, and the freight trains, the tonnage they ran was so heavy until a train didn't move faster than a man could get on or off, especially if he had any experience. So these fellows would hop on at Marshal and hop off at Craggy and vice versa, and so and so on.

Dr. Silveri: Did you always have to ride the trains as a detective?
Mr. Bailey: Yeah, about the only way we could get anywhere then was ride the train, the officer, you know. We'd ride them freight trains, especially if we'd had any difficulty about robbery on them. Now you see here's what we was up against them days; people would steal from the railroad when they wouldn't steal from nobody else. They'd steal these cigarettes, we'll say, and things like that that they had a ready market for. Nearly any ten-cent grocerman will fence cigarettes or buy cigarettes or any other thing that's hard to identify. Now you see, you can get a cigarette out of the original case just the cartons just like dollar bills. You can't tell one from the other and back them days, why it was a thief's (professional car thief's) salad to get into a cigarette car and steal cigarettes. 'Cause if you could ever get away with them and get them scattered out to various fences, it was hard to find them.

As I said now in the steam days, there was so many grades along the railroad that the steam power didn't put the trains over fast enough, but what these professionals could get on and off. They could do just about as well as a brakeman or a conductor or anybody on catching them or hopping them and so and so. Then in them days another thing that was detrimental to our cause, these steam engines had to stop every twenty-five miles to take on water.
Mr. Bailey: About ever fifty miles they'd have to stop and coal the engines, had coal chutes. Especially at night time when these high-class merchandise trains would be doing that, these thieves would be there breaking in the car and dumping the stuff out.

Dr. Silveri: Did you have any shoot-outs with these people at all?

Mr. Bailey: Yeah, we had a few little shoot-outs, shoot at them you know!

Dr. Silveri: Well, you would catch them, put handcuffs on them, put them on the train, and get them back to some place.

Mr. Bailey: Get them--sometimes it would be local fellows, and sometimes it would be--I caught --while I was working out of Greensboro, I caught a fellow from Chicago. A professional cigarette thief came down there from Chicago with an automobile with its backseat out, and he went down to Durham and watched them load these cigarettes at Durham. Had a colored boy with him about fifteen years old. Then he'd take the number of that car; he'd lay around the yard to see which direction it went out. Then he'd follow the train. Get away out somewhere at a weigh station or somewhere. That train would stop for something; he'd break into it, throw out ten cases of cigarettes, we'll say, haul them back to Chicago. Oh, he was a professional!

Dr. Silveri: That was the year that Coolidge ran.

Mr. Bailey: Coolidge is my favorite president!

Dr. Silveri: Why? Why do you say that?

Mr. Bailey: Well, I'll tell you why he is; he let the people alone. All this country needs is somebody to let them alone, they'll get out of this thing. If Roosevelt hadn't come in here after Hoover, we'd have been out of the Hoover panic and everything would have been back on even keel. Old Roosevelt jumped in here, and closed all the banks and this thing and that thing and established precedents that we can never overcome any more. And we never would have had them if we'd never had him. Coolidge is the fellow who let the people alone, tended to his own business.

I'm in favor of having a president to tend to our business, the business of the United States, instead of running all over this country to here, there, and the other. And a White House at California and one in Florida, and one in Camp David, and one up somewhere. I'm going to see if I can't get one established out here at Marshall! We've got a governor's mansion here, you know, somewhere's business. But what in the Heck, do we want to elect people for--ole Wilson now, if we'd never had no Wilson, we'd had no World War I. We never would have had any Worlds War II. Wilson was the first man, the first president who left the country; when he went over there--several things, you know, make the world safe for democracy. Boys, he made a hell of a out of that, didn't he?!
Mr. Bailey: Make you a political speech here in a little bit. But getting back to my friend Cal Coolidge, I met him personally. He came here one time and spoke, and I rode the train that he came in on. Now I'll tell you that was the greatest man that's ever been president of the United States. He wanted to do the right thing and did do it; he let the people solve their problems, and it's been this way. I've got a little piece of paper I can read you, and I may do it. You've never heard of anything like this under Cal Coolidge..."Grant to provide new jobs filed by the Commissioners..." (This was locally now, right here in Buncombe County) But one of them jobs, I won't go into the whole detail...the jobs would range from three hundred and thirty-three dollars a month, clerk, desk-typist, in the County Health Department to a thousand dollar a month recreation specialist. Recreation specialist, what is it would he do? Could you explain what a recreation specialist for Black Mountain. Let's see that's Congressman Taylor's home town. But I want to go on here a little further, then we'll jump on to something else.

End of Tape I

Side I, Tape II

Mr. Bailey: (continued) ...ten dollars a month, and a, inaudible, superintendent at a thousand dollars a month, one clerk-typist who would add to Buncombe County's Health Department along with two Sanitation men. I often just think of Cal Coolidge, what did Cal think about things like that?! By Golly! I'm for Old Cal. But anyhow, the thing about electing people to public office is you have to furnish them a house to live in and a seat of government to stay at, and then just go up there and run all over the country. Our governor does the same thing here now in this state and everything. But we're just as far afield.

Dr. Silveri: I want to get into the year 1928, which was an important year for you and--

Mr. Bailey: Sure was!

Dr. Silveri: For the country also.

Mr. Bailey: Yeah.

Dr. Silveri: That was the year in which Al Smith got the Democratic nomination for President, and Hoover got the Republican nomination, and it had repercussions in Buncombe County, didn't it?

Mr. Bailey: Yes siree, but that wasn't all--it wasn't a national issue that elected us Sheriff of Buncombe at that time. The country just went broke; Buncombe County went busted, and it was a local thing here. The Democrats got with the Republicans and they organized what was known as the Buncombe County Taxpayer's League.

By Golly, I stood on the same platform with some of the biggest
Mr. Bailey: (continued) Democrats of this county, Judge Adams, Jimmy (J. W.) Westall and others and made speeches for the Republican ticket. We just come right, and they elected us. I told them, "I can't be elected on a Republican ticket in Buncombe County without the help of the Democrats, and if they help me, I'll divide the offices with them!" That's the worst pledge I ever made in my life! I got into some jams!

Dr. Silveri: Why did you decide to run for sheriff again now that you were in a different county?

Mr. Bailey: Well, this a big plum up here! I could that old strawberry shortcake with that whipped cream a'sticking up! My Golly, I was sheriff of a little county down here eighteen thousand people the whole county, and here, Buncombe County, there was ninety thousand people! I was anxious to get in and have a lot of fun.

Dr. Silveri: Were there a lot of people asked you to run?

Mr. Bailey: Yeah, worlds of them! They was anxious--they was anxious for a change. Now, there's something about one of these jams I was going to tell you about. I went in office, and the Republicans hadn't been in since the Civil War, and they was so hungry for jobs. I had nine jobs to give away, and I had seven hundred and twenty-seven written applications for them jobs! There I was going to divide that with the Democrats!

Well, I made all the Republicans mad at me that I turned down and give Democrats that I promised. I made them all mad at me, and then I appointed these nine Democrats as I had promised to do. I made the regular Democratic Party all mad at the Democrats. Well, them Democrats that worked with me, they couldn't have been elected dog catchers! I seen one fellow with them--here awhile back, I saw one of my old deputies, and he had on the same suit of clothes that he had when I was in my office; the Democrats hadn't give him nothing!

Dr. Silveri: You mean in a big county like Buncombe you had only nine deputies?

Mr. Bailey: That's right.

Dr. Silveri: And that was enough?

Mr. Bailey: The other fellow had eighteen, but you see I was running on an economy issue, and I cut them from eighteen to nine, then divided them with the Democrats. Oh, I've been in a lot of these jams and things, but I always got out!

Dr. Silveri: Well, 1928 was a big year for the Republicans, a big sweep in Buncombe County; all the Republicans came.

Mr. Bailey: Yeah, all ever where.
Dr. Silveri: What's the story of the court house there? The Democrats had built a new court house, County Court House.

Mr. Bailey: Yeah, the sheriff had his name on the desk when I went in; of course, I tore it off and put my name on it! Dr. Silveri: Prohibition was still in force in those years; so, you had a lot to do with closing stills again?

Mr. Bailey: Yeah, and we didn't have no ABC officers, then, or nothing like that. We didn't have the Federal Prohibition forces, but we have nobody--I look back now and wondered how I ever got along in them days with no more help than I had. You know, they didn't have no--when I was sheriff in Marshal, of Madison County, had no Highway Patrol, no nothing. Nothing, no ABC men, no FB--no, no FBI men then; there wasn't no SBI then.

Dr. Silveri: Were there any famous cases, criminal cases, in those two years when you were Sheriff of Buncombe County?

Mr. Bailey: Yes sir. Several murder cases and things like that, but the first case I ever had that was tried in my court--I went in December of 1920 in Madison County, and they moved the case from Yancey County to Madison. I knew nothing about the circumstances or nothing. Moved it over here because they claimed they couldn't get a fair trial in Yancey. It's where two families, a Banks family and a Hensley family, a Banks had married a Hensley, and they had been feuding for years, typical mountain people.

Banks--there were four brothers and their father; they got to fighting about the same number on the Hensley's side. In doing that, they killed a Hensley and killed Bank's wife. They claimed she run in between them somehow and was killed accidentally. Anyhow they moved that case over to my court, and me a young, green officer, never had any court experience before or nothing, but I had a--of course, it wasn't my case and I didn't have to depend on getting the evidence, you know. I handled that magnificently, and they tried it and everything went off and built me up; give me a good, nice build up.

Dr. Silveri: By the time you became sheriff of Buncombe County, you had a lot more experience--

Mr. Bailey: I knowed everything, I thought! Somehow in a little county now eighteen thousand people to a county of ninety thousand, I thought, "Well, I'll eat this up!" I found out there wasn't--inaudible...

Dr. Silveri: It was more of a desk job for you in Buncombe County?

Mr. Bailey: Yes.

Dr. Silveri: You had so many people under you.
Mr. Bailey: But I'll tell you what I done. As I said awhile ago I just—it was a brand-new courthouse, and all your constituents were interested in it and seeing it and everything. I just acted more or less as a receptionist. They had an outlet to go out on top of it, those days; it was the tallest building in Asheville at that time, seventeen stories high. I would take my friends or anybody that would come to see me. Everybody was my friend then. You can be sheriff, and everybody will be your friend; they get a little something out of it.

That was in the Prohibition Era; a lot of big wheels like judges and other fellows sort of had to depend on the sheriff to get their drinking liquor. You had more friends—I can take liquor and do more with it as long as it lasts than you can money; that's the word friendship, but when your liquor gives out you are riding for a hell of a fall! I say those things humorously, sort of like Will Rogers, but there's a lot of truth in it.

Those fellows, back them times, like the old judges, big lawyers, big friends, and although I'm a prohibitionist, a dry man; I don't drink myself, but if a good friend of mine come around and say, "Sheriff, you got something that will knock the cobwebs out of your throat? I've got a little cold." What sheriff in this county or any other town that's going to turn a judge down? Or a governor? A governor?

Dr. Silveri: A lot of people come to you with their doctor's prescriptions?

Mr. Bailey: Oh my golly, I had—when I went in, I went to saving them. I had a big drawer there I'd throw them in; I was going to make a scrapbook of those things! I had told this—oh, everybody came in with a doctor's prescription. A doctor couldn't make you give it to them; they'd just write you a little note on the prescription pad that reads like this:

Sheriff Jesse James Bailey:

I have a patient, Tim Cox, who has pneumonia, and a little whiskey would be good for him. If you can help him, do so, and I will appreciate it.

Signed: John Smith, M. D.

I knowed they were in there, and when I went out of office, a few days before I went out, I got them out and counted them; I had twenty-three thousand!! That didn't represent all that got a little liquor either!

Dr. Silveri: How much would you give them out?

Mr. Bailey: Oh, give them about a pint.

Dr. Silveri: A pint of liquor?
Mr. Bailey: Yeah, and some I wouldn't give any. See, I knew pretty well who was the liquor heads. I never will forget this one; I had doctored the people there for everything from in-growing toenails to falling hair. One Sunday--these doctors would drink liquor, and they would try to get a little liquor channeled out through these prescriptions. I got so I could read--I made a practice of sort of reading human nature while I was in, figuring a man's mind to what he would tell the truth or not. It's a job on which you spend a lot of time a'figuring out a lot of things. So I got so when a man come into the office and asked for me--of course, they never would deal with anybody but me 'cause they couldn't get no liquor out of nobody else but me. I wouldn't let the deputies give them any.

But anyhow, this fellow came in one Sunday, and there wasn't but two or three people working around there, but I was there. He come in, and when a fellow comes in and wants a little liquor, he'll go to looking at the walls and look up at the ceiling, then look at the walls and look around to see who else is there. Then he'll go fishing around for that prescription. So I seen this guy, and he looked around and I knew what he wanted. Truth of the matter is I knew him. He said, "Sheriff, I've got a little prescription here I'd like for you to fill." He pulled it out and it read like this:

Jesse James Bailey  
Sheriff of Buncombe County

Please let the bearer, Mr. Buckner, have one half a gallon of good whiskey to rub a cow's other end, who's just had a calf.

Signed: John D. Smith, M.D.

All the doctors had now, and this doctor--it so tickled me--I said, "My friend I've been a' doctoring human beings ever since I've been sheriff, but this is the first time I've ever had a request for animals, and I ain't a'going to start to doctoring animals now!" So, turned him down, and he didn't feel good. They never feel good, if you ever turn them down!

Dr. Silveri: What did you do? You saved most of that moonshine that you got?

Mr. Bailey: Oh, I stored it. I had plenty to give away and plenty to pour out! I never had a bit of criticism on giving away any in my life, never did, 'cause nearly everybody loves a little liquor. Yes sir.

Dr. Silveri: You have been then the only man who has been sheriff of two counties in the State of North Carolina?
Mr. Bailey: In the State of North Carolina, yeah! That's as far as I can find. I had a friend of mine who I used to give a little nip to down at Raleigh. He was a good friend. You know you can make a lot of good friends on the other side; this fellow was State Auditor down there, dead and gone now. He was a friend of mine, and every time I'd take a little business down there, I'd put some maybe in a little jar. Actually I have--of course, I, myself never handed it over personally to the governor, but I took stuff down there that I know got to him!

Judges, same way! Had an old judge here one time, I never will forget, and they'll ride you, too, when they find they can get acquainted with you that much. I went over to Boone, and went on a little case. I seen my old friend Judge Jones over there, and I knowed I'd give him a lot of drinks in his life. He had a cold; so, I didn't know the sheriff over there very well. That was over in Avery County. I went to leave, and I said, "Sheriff, you may not know Judge Jones there like I do. He's a Democrat, but you can trust him. (This sheriff was a Republican in Avery County.) He's a good fellow; you needn't be a bit afraid of him. I've noticed he's got an awful cold this morning, and he probably needs a little something to knock the cobwebs out of his throat. If you've got anything, don't hesitate to give him a little something!" Sheriff said, "Cobwebs, hell! I've give him seventeen pints since his baby had it!"

Oh, I had a lot of fun as I went along; I never hesitated to have some fun, and I've had a lot of hard times, too, hard licks and hard knocks...

Dr. Silveri: When did you leave the sheriff's office?
Mr. Bailey: 1930.
Dr. Silveri: December of 1930?
Mr. Bailey: December of 1930.

Dr. Silveri: Well, the Depression had hit the country by then. You must have participated in a lot of foreclosures on land and--
Mr. Bailey: Oh my golly, this big boom here was in the '20's, along about '26, '27, and '28. I had dumped into my office one time from the Clerk of Court's office where people started foreclosures--this boom and bust, I had sixteen hundred summons of relief, that's starting Civil Law suits.

Sixteen hundred in one day, just on and on and on. It was terrible! Got so--of course, that's purely civil work, but it got so that some of the big people here that lost their money--people that had formerly had money, and these real estate's crowd from Florida had come in and filed, and anyhow had lost their money. They was suing and everything.
Mr. Bailey: Them poor fellows, good citizens (good men), got so that you'd have to run them down like criminals to serve a civil paper on them! I'd have to send my men out before daylight to park close to the house to watch them come out. You couldn't get a'hold of them. To serve a civil summons on a man, you've got to take and hand it to him and give him a copy of it. Nothing criminal about it at all, but it got so they had had so many served on them, they just didn't want to see no officers.

Dr. Silveri: Were you the one who got on the front steps of the Courthouse and conducted auctions for the tax lien.

Mr. Bailey: Yeah, when I didn't let some of the deputies do it or something.

Dr. Silveri: And you would take just whatever you could get from the crowd?

Mr. Bailey: That's right too; of course, you've always got ten days to--the defendants always got ten days to redeem that. You can raise that bid, ten per cent, or any outsider can. They can't--they've got to re-sell it, but you can't make a clean clear-cut deed to it for ten days.

Dr. Silveri: Well, then when you left in December, '30, then you went right back to the railroad?

Mr. Bailey: I went back the next day.

Dr. Silveri: Doing the same work?

Mr. Bailey: Yeah.

Dr. Silveri: Then from 1930 until you retired. You retired, when? In 1958, did you retire?

Mr. Bailey: I retired in 1958, but I left here. They gave me a bigger division, give me the Danville Division over in Greensboro. I left here in 1935, and I stayed at Greensboro; had the line from Salisbury to Monroe, Virginia, and from Greensboro to Raleigh. Oh, I had twice as much railroad; I had a force of seventeen men. I stayed there on it until 1940; I stayed over there five years. It was a hot line too.

Dr. Silveri: Let's go back to the early '30's. The Depression hit the country in '29, and things got steadily worse from '29 to '32, and in '32 we had Franklin D. Roosevelt running against Hoover for President. Of course, you voted for Hoover again in 1932?

Mr. Bailey: Yes. Yes, sir.

Dr. Silveri: What do you remember about those hard times in the early '30's?

Mr. Bailey: When I wasn't running for office myself, I didn't take this active a stand in politics as I did. Of course, since I went back to the railroad, I was kindly neutral. I didn't want to be too politically outspoken and me a'working for the people, for the railroad. The railroad was hard up, too. Then about all I done was just sort of done all I could for the party. That's about all I done.
Dr. Silveri: It was very bad times. It was worse than the Cleveland Panic, right?

Mr. Bailey: No, it wasn't worse than Cleveland 'cause there wasn't no money in the Cleveland Administration, and now the Hoover Administration—the difference between it was: if you had a quarter in Hoover's Administration, you could buy five dollars worth of merchandise with it. Now if you've got a quarter or under Roosevelt—-you can eventually build it up to this. Now, if you've got five dollars, you can't a quarter's worth! So there you are! What in the heck is the difference? It all gets back to a bunch of crooks, people working for theirselves sic. All the politicians in there, Nixon included, are working for theirselves!

Dr. Silveri: You had said before that if the country had let Hoover alone and re-elected him in '32, he would have brought the country—

Mr. Bailey: Oh, yes. No doubt about it in the world because he wouldn't have established—he might. See, he established this Federal Reserve business that you could borrow money on, but here's—here's what I had in mind was this. He wouldn't established these absolutely silly things like paying a thousand dollars a month for a golf inspector and things like that. He would have straightened the country, and the country was actually getting better when he come in. Roosevelt, he surged in, and he took us off the gold standard. He took us off this, and he took us off of that; he went to paying women for having illegitimate children. He went to—sh—we—it makes me sick! A fellow like me who come up the old hard way; I can't think about it.

Dr. Silveri: You never did vote for Roosevelt?

Mr. Bailey: No, siree! I never did.

Dr. Silveri: Well, back on your job on the railroad, you said the railroad was pretty hard up in the '30's. They were; they were suffering.

Mr. Bailey: Yes they were.

Dr. Silveri: You must have had a lot of people breaking into cars in those years!

Mr. Bailey: Yes, we had. But a thief, that don't make much difference about stealing. A thief will steal with money in his pocket, and he won't steal 'cause he's hungry. I know plenty of honest thieves that never stole; they'd go hungry before they'd steal—I mean before they'd—but on the railroad in certain things you get a slant that you've known before, and things that would convince you that actually you couldn't believe with your own eyes hardly.

What I have reference to is this, part of my work 'way back in the old days where there were lots of passenger trains part of my job was checking these passenger conductors, handling the cash fare. I think I got a more wonderful experience out of that than anything I done on the railroad. What I mean by checking these conductors is that me and my
Mr. Bailey: (continued) force and other operators—we'd go out and hire a stranger, and let him get on the train at a place where they don't sell no tickets. Pay the conductor a cash fare—that is, we check that conductor's cash fare report at the end of the run and see whether he had kept the money or not.

Well, that's the point that convinced me you can't tell much about a fellow's honesty. You can pin point a certain fellow and say, "Now, that fellow's a'stealing, and I'm going to catch him!" And you put your operators on and check him twenty times or forty times, and he'd cut them tickets just as straight as a line! Then you could find John Smith who had the name of being the most honest man, Honest John, we'll call him. He'd be a conductor; you'd put your operators on, and maybe they'd catch him three times out of five!

I had one fellow one time. I decided I'd catch him because he was a freight conductor, and he could steal a lot of freight from me. My employees all started fidgeting about outsiders 'cause you've got to handle them more delicate. You can't just run in and grab a man and say, "You're stealing!" You've got to have something. But this particular fellow, I remember he was running a freight train, a local freight, and he'd been stealing some local freight from me, cigarettes. I decided I'd catch him and let him watch one of the passenger trains. So back during World War II, he was running on the Murphy Branch out here. That's always good pickings because there's not too many agents out there. Gasoline was rationed, and tires were rationed; everybody was riding the train. So this fellow got on a passenger run... [inaudible]. I went to putting down tests on him; I put down nineteen tests on him, and he took nineteen fares! Only man I ever checked in my life that took every fare for all!

Dr. Silveri: He lost his job, of course?

Mr. Bailey: Yeah.

Dr. Silveri: Well, who was your boss?

Mr. Bailey: My boss was in Washington; I didn't work for the local people. I worked under a man in Washington, a vice-president. His name was Connelly, J. W. Connelly.

Dr. Silveri: Now this is the Southern Railroad. Did they go all throughout the South?

Mr. Bailey: Yeah, they've got about—now they've got right close to eleven thousand miles of railroad. They go from Washington to New Orleans, from Richmond to St. Louis, from Charleston to Memphis; of course includes Jacksonville, Savannah, and all of them places. It's a big company. Boys, it's a good one, too! Been noticing their stock lately?
Dr. Silveri: No, I haven't.
Mr. Bailey: Well, it went from a year ago it was right around about forty two or three; now it's ninety six. It has gone to ninety nine, lacked one point of going to it.

Dr. Silveri: Did you meet any famous people in the course of your work on the railroad?
Mr. Bailey: Yeah, met--rode with Franklin D. on many trips, and then I rode with--I mean I met--I had the duty of riding with Alice Longworth; that was Teddy Roosevelt's daughter. She came over this line once. I had to ride with all those famous people. I didn't let them know it, but I'd be in the car when Mrs. Roosevelt would be on. I was with her lots of times.

One time down here at Salisbury when I was on the Danville Division--of course, this might be a little too smutty, but it's humorous. She got on down there, and reservations was tight, and she couldn't get nothing but a low berth. There was an old drunk around there before she got on, and he got on. He happened to have this upper berth just over her. He was pretty well pipped, and started on up the road toward Washington. Hegot to making noise up there or something; she took her umbrella and bumped on the bottom of his berth which was just over her. He shut up for a little while,

Dr. Silveri: Was it Alice Roosevelt Longworth?
Mr. Bailey: No, this was--I was talking about--
Dr. Silveri: Eleanor Roosevelt?
Mr. Bailey: Eleanor Roosevelt.
Dr. Silveri: Oh, I see.
Mr. Bailey: No, Alice Roosevelt Longworth was a pretty woman. Then another notable personality--I went to Jacksonville--no, I went to Miami and got this Quezon, President of the Philippines at that time. He come up here; died later. He stayed a month out here at Grove Park, and I took him then from here to Washington. I don't know where he went from there; I can't remember now. But I took this special train, one car--just one-car train. Took him to Washington. I don't know--I've met a lot of big--

Dr. Silveri: How about Huey Long?
Mr. Bailey: No, I never met Huey.
Dr. Silveri: What was your opinion of Huey Long?
Mr. Bailey: He was a rabble-rouser like George Wallace! These people who are all for the people, you'd better watch them! People candidates, people men--George Wallace says he's the people's candidate. The old parties was run out. But by golly, it looks like now that old George might get the nomination on the Democratic ticket.
Dr. Silveri: It looks quite so.

Mr. Bailey: Oh, if he does, he'll beat Nixon surer than heck!

Dr. Silveri: Would you vote for him?

Mr. Bailey: No. No sir!

Dr. Silveri: Well, you were running your jobs through the second World War, and you saw the second World War. The government took over the railroads again, and you continued to do your detective work during the second World War—

Mr. Bailey: Yeah.

Dr. Silveri: On the Southern?

Mr. Bailey: Yeah, I worked right during that, but the government didn't take the railroads over then.

Dr. Silveri: Didn't they?

Mr. Bailey: The way they done that, they appointed—well, they did in a way, I guess. You see, they appointed all the presidents of the various railroads. They appointed them a Colonel. Our president, E. E. Norris, he was a Colonel, full uniform, but that was that. When they had buttered up to the railroad, and they got a right smart—I don't know. But Norris, now, wasn't a friend of Roosevelt's. Roosevelt called him in when they first started this bunk of changing the world. Roosevelt said, "Mr. Norris, what do you think of my program?" Old man Norris said, "I think it's cock-eyed!"

Yeah, if Hoover now, if Hoover had done this—if Hoover had just of give the people a little of what Roosevelt give them a lot of. Roosevelt dished it out to them too fast, all at one time and everything, and turned it over to John Lewis. Labor unions is what's ruined this country, and I'm an old union man. I belonged to one organization one time, thirty years; joined the Order of Railroad Telegraphers in 1907 and quit in 1937. Yeah, it's ridiculous, and the people wonder why the railroads ain't got no passenger trains. Well, the trouble is, when you know we've got a run from here to Salisbury, a hundred and forty-one miles. You know how much the engineer, conductor, and them fellows gets for running that? Fifty-two dollars a day! They have five men on a one-car train! The railroad can't stand that; they don't want to stand it! They're glad to exist 'cause the railroad don't want no passenger business.

Now my plan is this, and you can--old Booky and all of that crowd, they'll say, "The Amtrak ain't going to work, and this, that, and the other." It will work. What's the matter with the passenger business of the railroads of this country today? They've priced theirself out of business! My golly, you go down here, and they're discriminating against the passengers in addition to pricing themselves. You go down here and buy you a ticket to Washington, D.C., we'll say, cost you thirty-five or forty dollars. I don't know what it'll cost. But anyhow, what ever it costs, that's a ticket,
Mr. Bailey: (continued) a eight-coach ticket. You get down here to Salisbury, and you decide you want to use the Pullman from there on. Why, you've got to pay twice as much railroad fare, just exactly twice.

You buy a ticket from here to Washington by Pullman, and you've got to pay just exactly twice railroad fare to ride in the Pullman as you do the Day Coach in addition now to the Pullman fare. See? Why, it'd cost you seventy-five dollars to go from here to Washington by Pullman or there abouts somewhere. It's just all this stuff, wrangling around! They step up the fare, If you go in a Day Coach, the fare, we'll say, will be twenty-five dollars. If you go in a Pullman, the fare will be fifty dollars. That's railroad fare, now. Then in addition to your Pullman fare, for your bed and so and so.

Now, my theory is this—no railroad fellow wouldn't listen to it because he don't want it to work. I've been in it, and I know what I'm talking about. My theory would be this: try it anyhow. Reduce passenger fares to one-cent a mile where ever you want to go, any coach you want to ride in or any Pullman or anything else, now plus, of course, your Pullman. I'd be in favor of a man paying his Pullman fare. But not charge him double because he rides in a Pullman?

Now here's my theory about that. Your volume would pick up so dog-gone big! Why, it's a hundred and forty-one miles from here to Salisbury, we'll say, just using the eastern district for example. What fool is going to drive his car from here to Salisbury for a dollar and forty-one cents? Nobody! You'd go to the train! But you see the Interstate Commerce and all these do-daddle wheels that have to do with fixing fares say, we can't do that, it'd ruin the bus people! Or it'll ruin the airplane people! Oh, it'll just put them out of business!" Well, heck with that! Competition's what we need! It ain't to try to keep the railroad, and the bus people and the airplane people all a'running at the same time! What we need today is some good, old honest-to-goodness competition like we used to have when I used to work on the railroad!

Dr. Silveri: Before I forget it, I'd like you to tell me about that pin you're wearing.

Mr. Bailey: Yeah. Didn't I give you the history of that?
Dr. Silveri: Who gave it to you and all?
Mr. Bailey: Yeah.
Dr. Silveri: No.
Mr. Bailey: Well now, that's Mrs. Bessie Ann Sanford, and she was the owner of the Mountain Park Hotel, an estate in Hot Springs, by virtue of
Mr. Bailey: (continued) being the daughter of the man that built it, Colonel Rumbough. They were Yankees from up north somewhere; came down here 'way back before the Civil War. Bought these hot springs down here for only the immensely rich. Then the estate trickled down to Mrs. Sanford. Her name was Bessie Rumbough, and she first married Andrew Johnson's son over at Greenville, Tennessee. Johnson's buried over there, and lived over there until he died. His boy who married Mrs. Sanford bought this pin in Cairo, Egypt in--thirty years before she gave it to me. She gave it to me in 1921.

But in the meantime, he only lived two years. So she later married this fellow Sanford, ink man from White Plains, New York, still married into money, rich. She had this pen that he had bought on their honeymoon when they was in Cairo, Egypt. That's a stallion, and that is worshipped by the Egyptians. They worship it, and it was mounted in Paris, a lot of history to it. I done something down there, and while I was sheriff -- as I said though she later married this fellow Sanford, and then he died. Oh, she was filthy rich!

In the meantime I done something for her down there around Hot Springs that she liked when I was sheriff, and she come there one day and presented me this pen which I cherish very highly. I don't know what in the world I'm going to do with it 'cause I've got nobody--my daughter is the only person I've got to leave to; then she'll pass on. I thought about giving it to the State Museum at Raleigh. I'm a man without a country now. I've got no relatives of no kind or anybody much. My daughter's the closest--the only relative I've got. I've got no uncles, got no aunts, no cousins, no nothing.

Dr. Silveri: Still there are a lot of people around who remember you quite warmly.

Mr. Bailey: Yes, they do that. I've got lots of friends. Don't care where I go, I meet somebody that--

Dr. Silveri: You said before, I think, that you were interested in mountain music.

Mr. Bailey: Yeah.

Dr. Silveri: What had you done with respect to mountain music? Have you done any?

Mr. Bailey: Oh, I've--yeah. I conduct this shindig on the green up here now in the summer for the Chamber of Commerce, have been. I don't think I will this time. The Chamber of Commerce puts on a little show, free show, right on the Courthouse lawn. I've been--I've helped old man Lunsford get up his talent, and then I've been judges, judging in all these square dances, and I used to judge over at Hendersonville at the Apple Harvest Festival. They'd have a mountain shindig there. I'm crazy about mountain music!
Dr. Silveri: Have you done any yourself? Do you play any instrument? Do you do any singing or dancing?

Mr. Bailey: I used to play a five-string banjo when I was telegraph operator, and I quit. Now, oh I could start a tune I imagine, but I couldn't play enough to--my father was an old-time fiddler, and my uncle, who was my mother's brother here; he was a famous--he's been to Hollywood and went to New York, and Gabriel Heather's show. By the way, I saw where old Gabriel died the other day. Fiddling Bill Hensley, they called him.

He waited until he was seventy-four years old to kill his first man! He lived up on Avery's Creek in a shack up there, a camp; this fellow come along. He claimed he'd never seen him before, but he come in, and Fiddling Bill said he--they put him on the radio now, and he quoted this all on the radio. Hadn't been for that they'd never convicted him! They convicted for second-degree murder and gave him two years, and he stayed six months and mean Claude Love got him out. Claude's a lawyer down in Raleigh, friend of mine.

But anyhow, Fiddling Bill said this man come along, come in, and stayed awhile with him and drank up his liquor. Then he said he got "argueful!": That's the first time I ever seen that word printed, "argueful!". He got argueful, and he sat down in Fiddling Bill's famous rocking chair, and it made him Fiddling Bill mad. "F. B.," he said, "I just reached up on the wall and got my old shotgun down and let him have it!" It killed him deader than heck. Nobody there, no eyewitnesses, nothing. If old Bill hadn't--why, Reed Wilson put him on the radio that night, after they brought him in up there and questioned him. He told them that whole story about it.

Dr. Silveri: Well, Mr. Bailey, I've enjoyed this interview--

Mr. Bailey: I've just enjoyed every bit of it.

Dr. Silveri: I could talk to you for hours and hours and hours more, but I think we better--

Mr. Bailey: Oh, we ain't scratched the surface yet!

Dr. Silveri: I know you've got a million more stories that you could tell me!

Mr. Bailey: Well, talk about this--I've got two or three pretty good stories still on Madison County, running for sheriff. I don't know whether I told you the one about the old preacher that objected and campaigned against me for putting my picture in the picture show?

Dr. Silveri: Let's hear that!

{End of Side I, TapeII}
Mr. Bailey: ..."Now I didn't promise to work for Mr. Ramsey," he says, "I just promised to vote for him! So, I'll tell you what I'll do, make you a little proposition." I was inexperienced, you know. I was ready to swallow anything that come along. He says, "I've got a boy up there; if you'll appoint him as deputy sheriff in my township when you get elected, I'll put him out in my car. He can get you a lot of votes, and I'll just stay silent, still vote for Mr. Ramsey." I said, "Mr. Jones, by golly, I'd be glad to do that!" Didn't know this boy from inaudible; ...I'd never seen him!

Well, we agreed. I said, "Yes sir, I'll appoint him; you put him to work." And he did; he put that boy back in the Mars Hill section and all around getting votes for me, and the old man, too. I think he really done some work for me, although he claimed he was going to vote for Ramsey. But anyhow to make a long story short. It went on, and I was elected. Before, from the time I was elected 'til the time I was to go in office, it leaked out up there in the community that I was going to appoint Old-man Jones's boy.

My God, I got to getting letters from up there, you know, and they asked me what in this world was the matter with me, I hadn't consulted nobody or nothing! "Why," I says, "By Golly, I just got terribly upset!" I'd write to people, and I said, "Yeah, I'm going to appoint him!" And I was; I was fully determined to appoint that fellow if it was the last thing I ever done in my life, politics or no politics. I had a solid agreement with his daddy, and they had carried out--now if they hadn't a' carried out their part of the contract, I might have reneged on it.

But anyhow they had carried out what they said they was going to do. So, anyhow, by golly, I just kept getting letters, and I'd write back, and several of my friends got mad at me. So they decided they'd have a little mass meeting down there at Marshall and invite me. They had this mass meeting and invited me, said, "Why you ain't going to appoint that guy!" I said, "Yeah, I'm going to appoint him!" I upset them terrible! It was getting up close to time for me to go in; they said, "That'll ruin you sure!" Well, anyhow I went on determined to appoint that fellow, if I never got another vote in my life for nothing!

Anyhow, here's how I worked out of that, and to show there's always a Greater Power. I've always been a strong believer in getting a little help from God Almighty! I was doing a little praying all the time that something would happen. But anyhow, I went down there that morning to be sworn in,
Mr. Bailey: (continued) and the first two dog-gone people I seen as I walked up to the Courthouse was this old man and his boy! I shook hands with them with a big smile, and I said, "Mr. Jones, see you got your boy down here this morning to be appointed." "Yes, sir. I brought him down." Hadn't been a word ever said about his background or his character or anything. Anyhow, I went on, and I was determined. I was busy around there, and the people all floating around, but every time I'd turn my head in any direction, I'd see Old-man Jones and his boy. I'd meet him maybe in the hall; I'd say, "Just give me a little time here, Mr. Jones, and I'll get ready." All the time I was offering up a little prayer to God Almighty to get me out of that awful situation.

Well, sir, I walked around --first around there, and thought I'd find a quiet moment, maybe, and I had a thought just like that from the sky. That was about a bond. He'd never named a bond nor I'd never named one when we made the trade. The next time I seen the old man, I said, "Now listen here, Mr. Jones, when you and me made that agreement, neither one of us ever thought about it. This fellow's got to be a bonded man; he's got to give me a bond for faithful performance of his duties and so and so. I can't appoint him without a bond. I assume, of course, you can make the bond, a five-hundred dollar bond?" "Oh, yes. Yes."

They gave bonds then individually; didn't have a bonding company. Anyhow, I said, "Tell you what you do: you go out here and get you a bondsman, and bring him in here and everything. We'll get the papers, the bond papers, and get everything all fixed up, and swear him in." Well, he said, "Just give me about ten or fifteen minutes." He went out and stayed gone ten or fifteen minutes, and seemed like all during that time there was a big rock right here, just a-hanging 'way down, heavy on me. I could hardly get my breath, right on my heart.

Well, directly about ten or fifteen minutes, Old-man Jones come back and motioned for me. I went out there, and he said, "Mr. Bailey, now I'll tell you, when you and me made that agreement about appointing Jim your deputy, you never thought of the bond nor I never either. He can make a bond, of course, but we've just decided if it's alright with you that we won't have an authority!" I said, "Mr. Jones, that's a terrible disappointment to me!" It just seemed like that big rock just lifted off, flew off just like a bird! My golly, I never was so happy in my life!

Dr. Silveri: They couldn't afford the bond?
Mr. Bailey: I says, "Now, I'll scrape around and get me somebody else up there, but I was depending on him!"
Dr. Silveri: That's great!
Mr. Bailey: When you go around town with a big lie like that, just ask the Lord to show you a way out, and he will directly! I've got lots of other good stories like that.

Dr. Silveri: You mentioned religion. Were you Baptist all your life?
Mr. Bailey: Yeah. Baptist, born and reared. Yeah, I'm a strong Baptist--I can't--that's my trouble now--is--what are you? Catholic?

Dr. Silveri: Yes.
Mr. Bailey: Well they're devoted people. I've got some good friends that are Catholic. They're very devoted, and some of the best friends I've ever had on the railroad were Catholic. This woman that gave me this pen was Catholic.

Dr. Silveri: There weren't many up in Madison County in those years, were they?
Mr. Bailey: Nobody, but her. She was the only Catholic, and her people wasn't Catholic. She decided to be different from anybody, and I went to her funeral. They counted them beads and... Inaudible, I told them I was a Baptist.

Dr. Silveri: Excuse me. Did you belong to the regular Baptists or the Freewill Baptists?
Mr. Bailey: No, I belonged to the Missionary, Missionary Baptists; that's the deep water kind where they souse them down!

Dr. Silveri: At what age were you baptized?
Mr. Bailey: About twenty-five.

Dr. Silveri: Twenty-five? With immersion?

Mr. Bailey: Yeah.

Dr. Silveri: In a river?
Mr. Bailey: Pool.

Dr. Silveri: Oh, a pool?
Mr. Bailey: Slammed me right down in a pool! But now, at my age I've never been too religious, although I've tried to live an honest and honorable life. I could have made a lot of money in my life if I'd been dishonest, and it wasn't honesty that kept me from doing it either. Observation kept me from doing it; I've been a close observer all my life, and I've noticed that people got money dishonestly, why, they never did keep it. Something would come along or some way. Even if they didn't lose their money, I've seen them lose loved ones, cancer or some malady or something. God Almighty will punish a man for his sins; I believe that just as strongly as I believe in the end. My trouble is now I've lived eighty-four years, and I tell somebody in eighty-four years I don't know that I've ever saved a soul! I'm going to be awfully blank when I go on up there and nobody or nothing. As far as I know, I've never saved a soul in my life! It sort of worries me now, you know. But anyhow, that's done gone; my life's gone, and I can't bring it back.
Dr. Silveri: Have you done any traveling around the country?
Mr. Bailey: I've been to every state in the United States, but three.
Dr. Silveri: Have you been to my home state of Massachusetts?
Mr. Bailey: Yeah, I've been there; went up—that's the last state that I've been in. I guess was—my daughter and my wife (that was before she got sick), and me went to Montreal about ten years ago, and we stayed all night—oh, we stayed three or four days there. Come back over into western New York, and then we just went on out through New Hampshire and Vermont, every state that they is up in there. That's the eastern states that we'd never been in; we went on into Maine. Then come back down, finally wound up in Rhode Island and come on. Of course, I'd been in New York and Connecticut and them places many times before.
Dr. Silveri: This was on the train? You were going on the train through these?
Mr. Bailey: No, we was in the car in this last trip, but I had been on a train up in there. But this time I was studying about, the only three states, (and it's very novel—it's very odd that I haven't been into) is California, New Mexico, and Wyoming. I've been across the United States a couple of times to the northwest, Seattle. From Seattle I've been clear on up into Victoria, British Columbia; went up Puget Sound on a boat and the other things, but I've never been to California. I've never been to Wyoming—no, not Wyoming. I've been to Wyoming. What's the state joining California? Arizona. Arizona and New Mexico.
Dr. Silveri: You never thought of living anywhere but in western North Carolina, though?
Mr. Bailey: Ain't seen but one place in my life that I'd as soon live at. I mean that I'd choose to feel as good as I would feel here, and that is Seattle, Washington, around the State of Washington. Of course, if it's going to leave here—now me and my daughter, if we wasn't so old, we'd figure on leaving here right now and going to Canada, it's mountainous, you know. Roosevelt messed this thing up 'til by golly, we just decided we'd leave, but we're too old.

Another thing, if I was a young man, be dog-goned if I wouldn't go to Mexico. I'm thinking about going down there on a little trip, tour. My daughter's going 'm; this Billy Graham crowd to Egypt, I believe, next year. Seems like it's Egypt or—

Dr. Silveri: What do you think of the Vietnam War?
Mr. Bailey: I'm against it. Just like—getting back to Cal Coolidge; now, if we'd a've stayed out of there and let other people's business alone. I've learned this in sheriffing; if you go to messing up with people, two fellows fighting, if, I run out there and say, 'Here! Quit this! You ought to be ashamed of
Mr. Bailey: (continued) yourselves!" Directly, they'll both jump on me, and especially women! I don't know at the number of times that I've seen-- where a fellow over here, a policeman, got shot the other day, fooling around a woman and a man who was in a fight.

But I don't know at the calls I've answered where a woman claimed that her husband was abusing her, and I'd go answer the call 'way out here towards Leicester, drove six or seven miles one Sunday. Called in, and I was sheriff. I wanted to go myself; I went out there, and her and this man had been fighting. She wanted him arrested, 'til I got out there! I got out there and undertook to drag him out. He says, "Martha, don't treat me this way now, they'll put me in jail!" God damn it if she didn't beg me to turn him loose! I did! Ah law, I've been a peculiar character in my life; that's the reason my deputies give me a pin --they gave me--question mark. Gave me it. So this lady that's...inaudible, she got this question mark.

Dr. Silveri: So, your deputies gave you this pin?
Mr. Bailey: Yeah, all of them made up and gave it to me.
Dr. Silveri: In the shape of a question mark?! Is that diamonds in there?
Mr. Bailey: Yeah! Chipped diamonds. I showed you--you've seen my badge they gave me the first year I went in?
Dr. Silveri: No, I didn't see that.
Mr. Bailey: Didn't you?

Dr. Silveri: What follows is Jesse James Bailey reminiscing as we drive through the countryside in the mountains on a beautiful May morning; a countryside that he knew so well.

Jesse James Bailey: ...weeds about to take me. All this forest is mine here. We used to own it plumb up to the corner, and I sold them fellows enough to build them two stone houses there. Wished I could buy it now, get twice the amount that I--of course, money ain't worth no more than it was when I sold it.

Dr. Silveri: I can't get over this beautiful day that we have down here!
Mr. Bailey: What was?
Dr. Silveri: Sunny days--
Mr. Bailey: Yeah! It gets cold of a night; I bet you high on Mount Mitchell right now you'd have had to have a coat!
Dr. Silveri: Wow! Ok, we'll travel awhile on #19 in Madison County; then we turn off into Yancey County, right?
Mr. Bailey: Yes. It takes off—you mean #19, Road #19?
Dr. Silveri: Yeah.
Mr. Bailey: Yeah, just beyond Mars Hill. It goes into—now #23 goes straight on into Flag Pond and Erwin, Tennessee, which is just barely over the line. But now this #19 rambles around and goes—it splits out yonder at 19-East and 19-West over 'til you get to Burnsville, but at 19-East it turns off over yonder and goes on Burnsville and Spruce Pine and on across. This is the real Knoxville road, 25-70. You see I'm on four main highways: 25 and 70, and 19 and 23.

Dr. Silveri: Micaville... Do they still mine mica up there?
Mr. Bailey: Oh yeah, they still mine it. It's not as extensive as it was, but Yancey County used to be one of the biggest mica mining propositions in the whole United States during World War I and II when they had to have it for fixing things. But they don't use mica now like they used to. They used to insulate all the spark plugs and everything with mica. They used it in the Army and all like that.

Dr. Silveri: ...at Spruce Pine, do they have anything going on there?
Spruce Pine, what do they do there?
Mr. Bailey: Well, that's the community center for Mitchell County. Back in the railroad days it was very high on the railroad operations. It was sort of a division point for the C. C. & O. Railroad. That's the railroad that runs from Johnson City to Spartanburg, South Carolina. Well, it really runs from a place up in Kentucky called Elkhorn City, Kentucky, to Spartanburg.

Dr. Silveri: They did a lot of lumbering up there in Yancey County?
Mr. Bailey: Oh yeah, that was back in the old days—greatest lumber. They lumbered all—they cut over all that Mount Mitchell territory there. See Mount—that's the land where Mount Mitchell burnt is now is all been cutover. That's cut-over land.

Dr. Silveri: Does the Toe River go through that county? Yancey County?
Mr. Bailey: Through where?
Dr. Silveri: What's that river that goes through that county?
Mr. Bailey: Well, there's two. We'll cross two rivers over here at Spruce Pine. We'll cross Cane River and then Toe River. Toe River and Cane River comes together down below there before it gets down to Erwin, Tennessee. Now we'll be right along the Tennessee border pretty close all the way along over there. Over on the Tennessee side we join Madison County, and Yancey County joins what's known as Unicoi County, Tennessee. Erwin is the capital of that—I mean the county seat of that county.
Mr. Bailey: This C. C. & O. Railroad, Carolina Clinchfield & Ohio, was built through there from Johnson City to Spartanburg, and it connects two railroads, the L & N Railroad and the Coastline or Seaboard Coastline, at Spartanburg. It's a link in between there to get them clear through from the upper eastern part of the United States into the south lands, Florida, Miami, and all them countries. Of course, this road over here now: this is a typical coal road more or less like the L & N and Norfolk and Western--comes right in the coal mines.

Dr. Silveri: People who live in Yancey County any different than the people who live in Madison County?

Mr. Bailey: Well yeah, a little different. People from Madison County has always been known as a sturdy, Anglo-Saxon crowd that come in there years ago and settled up--never did change much.

Now right up here about where this #19--right there--stop right there and let me get out. I'm going to run in the drugstore. Just anywhere, right there. [they pause]

They, the old people--it orginated from Weavers--came in here around the Revolutionary Century, and they called it Weaverville. Weaverville, some old aristocrats come out of here.

Dr. Silveri: This is still Buncombe County though, right?

Mr. Bailey: This is Buncombe County, yeah. Here's my doctor's office, Dr. Lawrence Sprinkles; young fellow, pretty good little doctor. His father was a doctor; his father was from Marshall in Madison County. I just got to going to see him; I love the family. I knew Old Doc's father, and his name was Charley; he died several years ago. Educated his son Lawrence; made a doctor out of him. He's a right-good, little doctor; I like him right well.

See, I lived in this community ten years once, right down there on Monticello Road out here. I had thirty acres down there. So, I tell a right good story on Old Doc and Young Doc Sprinkles here. Old Doc sent this young fellow off and educated him, and he come back and started practicing with his daddy. His daddy was a widower and lonesome, and he decided he would take a long over-due vacation.

Dr. Silveri: We take a right here?

Mr. Bailey: Right. So he gets ready to leave everything in the hands of his boy Lawrence, who had just started his practice. So he went on his vacation; gone a month or two. Come back, and he said, "Son how did you get along with my patients?"
Mr. Bailey: Dr. Lawrence said, "Fine, fine; just had good luck Pa. You know a lot of them people's been a'going to you for years. Old Lady (Bradly) on Reems Creek hadn't walked a step in years, (New found doctor) and I set in to doctoring her and in a couple of weeks I had her up a'walking around, just fine shape. She's threw her cane away, and she's walking good shape!" Old Doc dropped his head a little and sort of studied on that one. Then he says, "Well, you know, son, that's good. I'm glad you got the Old Lady Bradly up and going around. Do you know that old lady paid your way through college?!" I used to tell that on (Old) Doctor!

Now this is known as the Flat Creek section. Flat Creek is that creek up there. Now that other one that we come into--I mean that we crossed into Weaverville was Reems Creek. A lot of Reems' lived up in there at one time. All this section out in here was known as Flat Creek, and inhabited mostly in the old days by Weavers: Doug Weaver, and Bill Weaver, and Weavers, Weavers, Weavers. Right here's where the Asheville Racetrack is; right up there on the left.

Dr. Silveri: What do they race there?
Mr. Bailey: They have races there.
Dr. Silveri: What kind of races?
Mr. Bailey: Automobile races. Do you know anything about horse races?
Dr. Silveri: Not much.
Mr. Bailey: Neither do I! Never saw one in my life. I had an opportunity to go there today, to Louisville. A very dear friend of mine, who's the retired President of Southern Railway, he leaves here this morning--he lives--he's got a summer home. His name is Brosnan; he's got a son whose a doctor here that made these glasses for me, Dr. Bill Brosnan. Mr. D. W. Brosnan, retired President of Southern Railway, I had lunch with him day before yesterday out at the Biltmore Country Club. He said, "South Winds a'coming through here today." That's the corporate jet that the Southern owns--was getting in here today and taking a bunch of them to the horse races at Louisville. So he asked me to go with them, but I don't care about going to see a thing much that I don't know nothing about.

I only saw one football game in my life, and I saw it by accident almost. I was sheriff of this county, and Judge (Bryman) from Durham and the post master, and a bunch of them--big football fans--and they all were for Duke. They came through here in 1928 and wanted me to go with them. So, I went with them; after we got started I realized why they wanted me to go. Judge (Bryman) was a driving a big Cadillac and everything. Come to find out—that was during the Prohibition Era, and all they could get was white liquor. So they wanted me—they got a little too tight
Mr. Bailey: (continued) to drive. They wanted me to drive because they knew I didn't drink, and I done that very thing; they all got pretty high.

We got down there, and Duke was playing Tennessee. As we got down there, they was all pretty full, had a little liquor with them. So they got to betting on Duke; they was for Duke. After while so far as I knew, or the way it looked like the wind was blowing, it looked like Tennessee was eating up Duke, and they were. So these fellows had bet and bet and bet. Bet down everything they had; watches, rings, jewelry. I was the only sober one in the crowd! They was betting with them east Tennessee fellows from down there around Madisonville, somewhere down in there. Anyhow I was the only sober fellow in the bunch; so they made me the stake holder, put all of their bets up with me.

Of course, I didn't know much about it. Anyhow, the game went on. Just before the end, it looked almost conclusive that Tennessee was going to win. Two or three minutes, the bell rang or whatever stopped them, I had all of this money, five or six hundred dollars. I was always the kind of fellow who want to have a little fun someway. I just got up and started out. I had on my badge: Sheriff of Buncombe County, big gold badge, shining.

I just flashed my badge back: "Gentleman, I'm sheriff of this county! (I was down in Knoxville; I was telling them a lie) I'm sheriff of this county. (I flashed my big gold badge) You know it's against the law to bet on a game of chance. You fellows are guilty here, and I could put you all in jail if I wanted to. Furthermore, the law says in case an officer raids a gaming place, he confiscates the money. I've confiscated all of this money, and I've got to go!"

I started out of there. Three or four of those old east Tennessee fellows they'd had a drink or two, too. They tore out after me, grabbed me. They said, "Let's see your authority here. Damn if I ain't going to know something about this before you leave here with my money!" I burst out in a big laugh, a big smile; I said, "Well my God, fellows, can't you take a joke!" I taked, sic, them all home; then I decided I'd settle that back because I was sober.

Dr. Silveri: What are they doing? Putting a new interstate highway through here?
Mr. Bailey: Yeah, they are building that free way on out this way.

Dr. Silveri: It's a beautiful view from here!
Mr. Bailey: Ain't this pretty? Now right down here when we cross this creek, we'll roll into Madison County. Old bloody Madison!
Mr. Bailey: This is called the forks of Ivy; now two Ivy's come together here. Big Ivy runs up to the right here as you see, and the other one comes down the way we're going on up called Little Ivy. Boy, they run into a rock cliff there, didn't they?

Now, this is the county line. When I was a running for sheriff of this county in 1920, and that's been over fifty years ago, there was a big politician lived in that house right up there, but I stayed all night in that one right over there. A fellow by the name of Stokes Ledford lived there; I remember it as well as yesterday. An old farmer, wasn't no houses around here then, just one or two. Old Stokes was a farmer, farmed all this land. Boy, had my horse. I was on horseback. Wasn't but five automobiles in the county then, and none could get up in here without being pulled.

Now this is Little Ivy; the one we crossed over yonder was Big Ivy, and it forks right down there. This is called the East Fork of Ivy, goes right on up to the Yancey County line. Now there's one up here before we get on directly after we get off on #19 going towards Burnsville called Middle Fork. There's three prongs of this creek goes up here; after it gets up here a little bit, there's one that, turns off called East Fork, and the one we are following on out up through here is called Middle Fork. Then the one that goes to the left is called California's Creek. It goes up--here's the way you go to Mars Hill, but we'll go right on; we'll miss Mars Hill a little bit.

Old tobacco farmer came down there one day about six or seven years ago, two of them. They run right out in this road and bumped a big truck, never even stopped; knocked them away off over yonder in the field and killed them both. That old farmer, ragged as I am now, had ten thousand dollars in cash in his pocket--

Dr. Silver: Wow!

Mr. Bailey: Hundred-dollar bills! Yes sir, they picked him up and searched him.

Now this section in here is known as the old McElroy place. Used to be an old-timey house right in here. An old-timer by the name of McElroy raised a family in here. McElroy place, I used to know every home in here. They wasn't no more than one-tenth of the houses here then that they is now. No road here at all; was a little old dirt road about wide enough for a lumber wagon.

Now sir, you wouldn't hardly believe this story, but I can remember when they hauled lumber; had these little, called them, portable sawmills.
Mr. Bailey: They hauled lumber from Yancey County as far as Burnsville over here; wasn't no railroad into Burnsville then, plumb into Spruce Pine, none nowhere. That was along about '07 and '08 and along there. But they hauled that lumber, sawed it over here with them little portable sawmills, and hauled that lumber from Burnsville to Alexander over here right down below me. You know where Alexander is. Loaded it at Alexander on the railroad cars; shipped it out of here, finest, great-big, wide poplar boards. Some of them were twenty-four inches wide Tulip poplar. It was the virgin timber of this country. That's the only thing I can hold against the Yankee people: come down here and bought that stuff from these mountaineers who needed money and didn't have any other way in the world.

Them old--well, mostly West Virginians, I believe they called W. M. Ritter, all that crowd; Ritter Lumber Company. They come down here and buy that stuff. I'd see them buy it for twenty-five cents a thousand on a stump, a thousand feet, stump...inaudible, for twenty-five cents. Of course, it cost them a lot of money to get it out of there; some of them had to pay a railroad truck down yonder to shoot that across to that mill wheel going to Hot Springs. There was a railroad run up that creek there for twenty-five or thirty miles to the state line.

Now, we turn right, right down here. Now sir, I've got an interesting story to tell you about this little section right here. There was an old man had a house--all the old houses been tore down, but they wasn't no road here then. It stops down yonder; you can see where it goes down. Old man lived in there by the name of Bill Edwards. His son Jeeter lived right here.

Here's the old road going around that a'way and the ring goes around, and Old Bill was a moonshiner, bad liquor drinker. They called him Liquor Bill Edwards. They had two in this state, one of them was known as Liquor Bill, pretty good citizen, except he just made booze and sold bad liquor, and always drunk. But they lived right there, had a pretty good farm there, joined an old farmer by the name of--he had a country store down there by the name of John White.

I never will forget this, I kept getting reports on Liquor Bill; so went up there one day, one morning. Right up above his house in that hollow there, (they had lots of trees there then) he had a big still and was running it with a sawmill boiler, by golly. Sawmill steam was a'stinking then. Regular old sawmill boiler, and while we was cutting it up, Old man Liquor Bill got away; run on off up the hollow. That night his neighbor down there, who had this big store, but it was empty; he ran a fine, old-manner storehouse, and there Old Liquor Bill suspicioned Old-man John White of reporting it, see. Dog-goned if he didn't go right there and burn that old man's store down! Then I was after him for running a still and for burning that store
Mr. Bailey: (continued) I mean for burning the house.

Well, sir, I run that old fellow out of this country; he left here completely. I traced him and traced him and traced him; I was determined to have him, and I traced that guy nearly a whole term as sheriff! I was doing it when I first went in; I traced him to Greenville, Tennessee. He had a boy over there in the tobacco business. I run him away from there.

I traced him then to 'way out west, Colorado; he had a boy or kinfolks out there, and he got away from out there. Well, I lost that guy, and I traced, and I traced, and I traced. Took me a long time, several months, to ever pick up any more information on him. But I was determined, and my term was getting up close to running out. Liquor Bill was still in the woods, and I was determined to have that guy; so, I tried and I hunted, and I hunted. By golly, I got info on him that I thought he was located down in Spartanburg, South Carolina.

I didn't do a thing but get on a train. You travelled by train all the time then. I got on that train and went down there. I followed out my information that he was working in a mill at a place called Beaumont. So, I went over there, and the mills always have a security police, you know. I went over there and took my warrant, and give it to this old guy who was a very active old fellow, old security police was. He said, "We'll find out if he's here!" I went over there at the payroll office and run down the payroll record. There he was! Working right in the mill, working that day.

I will never forget that poor old fellow. I went over there, you know, with this corporation police; went in there. He got so old since I'd seen him; see, I hadn't seen him in two years! He got so old since I'd seen him, and in that cotton mill with that lint on his hair, and it was white, too. I said, "You are about the oldest-looking man I've ever seen! Is your name Bill Edwards?" He said, "Yes sir." I said, "My name is Jesse James Bailey; I'm Sheriff of Madison County, North Car--" "Lord God! Mr. Bailey, you ain't come after me?" I said, "That's exactly who I'm after!" He begged, and he pleaded, and everything. But I brought him back here, tried him. Tried him just on burning the barn, I mean this old storehouse, and they sent him to prison for two years.

End of Side II, Tape II