## COLONEL PAUL ROCKWELL

Interviewed by:

Dr. Louis D. Silveri

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SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS RESEARCH CENTER

The University of North Carolina at Asheville

## Subjects Covered

Ancestry	. 1
Education	7
Enlistment in French Army	8
Experience in World War I	9
Rejoins French Forces in World War II	17
Spanish Civil War	19
Joins U.S. Air Force, 1942	. 20
Early Asheville	23
Remarks on North Carolina Politics	24
Asheville's Land Boom, 1920's	26
Tom Wolfe	28
Race Relations in Asheville.	31
Character of Mountain People	35
Career of Reuben Robertson	36
Conservation	37
Theodore B. Harris	41
William Highsmith	42
Comments on North Carolina Leaders	43

Interview with <u>Colonel Paul Rockwell</u>, July 22, 1976. Interviewed by Dr. Louis D. Silveri.

<u>Colonel Paul Rockwell</u>: I went over there, and I spent a little time in Naples, but somehow or other I never did put my foot on Roman soil except the airport. I kept postponing the trip, and now it's a little late. I doubt that I'll ever visit Rome. You've been there, of course?

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Yes, I have. I'd like to start by asking you when and where you were born.

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: I was born in Marion County, South Carolina, the third of February, 1889. Marion was named for General Francis Marion.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: That makes you eighty-seven years old!

Paul Rockwell: Yes. Soon I will be eighty eight.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: How far back can you trace your ancestry?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Can I trace my ancestry? Well, to eleven hundred and something in England.

Dr. Silveri: O. K. About the first ones that came over here?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>; The first ones who came over. Well, my grandfather, nine generations back, William Rockwell, came over in May and landed at what is now Boston, the thirtieth of May, 1630. My mother's family, the Ayres, came to Jamestown in Virginia before 1620. Their names are on the record in 1620.

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: (continued) My father's mother's family, the Powells, came to Jamestown in 1607. My mother's mother's family came to South Carolina in 1737. So, I'm a real American, I suppose.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Sure. Was your father born in South Carolina?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: My father was born in North Carolina. My mother was born in South Carolina.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Where was your father born in North Carolina?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Whiteville, Columbus County.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Is that in the Piedmont?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: No, that's near the coast. That's near Wilmington, the eastern part of the state.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: What about your ancestors during the Civil War? I imagine you know quite a lot about that.

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Well, most of them were in the Confederate Army from the day it started until General Joseph E. Johnston surrendered at Durham, North Carolina in May, 1865.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Did they all survive the fighting?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Oh, yes. My father's father died in 1874, and my mother's father died in 1914. He really had a great influence on me because my father died when I was four, and I lived with my grandfather a good deal.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: He fought in the Civil War?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: He was in the Eighth South Carolina regiment, yes.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: You heard a lot about that war from him?

Paul Rockwell: A great deal. Yes.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Was he strongly for the South? \_

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: All of my people were strongly for the South!

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: In other words, they weren't the kind that accepted the situation rather?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: They lived and died un-reconstructed!

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: O. K. That's what I wanted to find out. You got the story from your grandfather as you were growing up, and it had quite an influence on your own thinking, didn't it?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Well, I imagine so. Yes. You grow up with that. My family on both sides suffered a great deal from the war, and had a good many members of the family killed and others wounded, and lost a good deal of possessions.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: You say your father died when you were four years old? \_

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Yes.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: So that was 1893. How many children in your family? How many brothers and sisters?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: One brother and one sister, both of whom are dead. <u>Dr.</u>

<u>Silveri</u>: What was your father's occupation?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: He was a writer and a clergyman. He died of typhoid fever in 1893, the epidemic. They used to have those epidemics very frequently. <u>Dr.</u>
Silveri: What church was he a minister of? What church did he belong to?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: He started out as a Presbyterian, but he became a Baptist.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: That's the church he did most of his work in, then?

Paul Rockwell: Yes. Yes.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Was the family mainly Presbyterian going back in generations?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Oh yes. Many generations going back. My mother's family were Episcopalian going back many generations, but they lived in the part of the country where there were no Episcopalians and where the Baptists were. Where I was born in South Carolina is Baptist country, still is, which influences that.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: You mentioned that your father was also a writer. What kind of work did he do?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: He wrote poetry and essays, book reviews, and things like that.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: What was his first name?

Paul Rockwell: James Chester Rockwell.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: James Chester. When he died in 1893, then he left your mother with two children to care for?

Paul Rockwell: Three.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Three children to care for. Did you go to school in Marion County?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Some in Marion County and some in east Tennessee, where we lived in the mountains of east Tennessee.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: How did you get to east Tennessee?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Well, they came up from the low country for reasons of health.

Both of my parents were advised to live in the mountains. I think probably it was malaria, but that was a long time ago.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Did you come and live in the summertime only?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: No. We lived there part of the year, but we would go back to South Carolina a good deal.

Dr. Silveri: Where 'bouts in east Tennessee was that?

Paul Rockwell: Newport.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Oh. Newport, Tennessee.

Paul Rockwell: That's not far from here.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Well, Newport was a very small town back in those days.

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: It still is. Well, it's larger now.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: A lot of industry around there, I think.

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: It was, I suppose, fifteen hundred when I was a boy living there.

Twelve of fifteen hundred. A very pleasant town, county seat.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Why there instead of the mountains of Western North Carolina which was closer?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: That I don't know. I don't know. I think the mountains down there are very lovely, you know. It's lovely country, and in those days, it was much better to live in than it is today in many ways. It's not industrialized now like they are here. That kind of thing doesn't improve, doesn't make a country better to live in.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: So your father never did any farming, did he?

Paul Rockwell: No. No. No.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Can you remember your first year of school?

Paul Rockwell: My first year of school? Vaguely, yes.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: What kind of education was available to students during those years?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Well, I would say a sounder elementary education than is available today. Reading, writing, and arithmetic. I was taught a good deal of history, and things like that. My parents, both of them, were well educated.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>; Did your father have a chance to go beyond elementary school education? What kind of education did your father have?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: My father graduated from a boarding school at Laurinburg, North Carolina, and then went to a theological seminary. My mother was a graduate of Chowan College in Murfreesboro, North Carolina.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: What was the name of the college?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: C-h-o-w-a-n. It's a good little college still over near the coast, eastern part of the state. Quite a good college.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: When did the family move up here?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: To Asheville?

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>; Yes.

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: 1906. Exactly seventy years ago.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: You were seventeen years old when you moved up here?

Paul Rockwell: Yes.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: You went through high school education back home in South Carolina?

Paul Rockwell: Yes.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: When you came up here in 1906, did you have one more year of school?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: No, I graduated from high school. I went to college, Wake Forest College, and to Washington and Lee University in Virginia.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Why did the family come to Asheville?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Well, it was a better place to live, larger, better for growing children, I would say. Well, it seemed to be. I don't know.

Dr. Silveri: It was just your mother and the three children?

Paul Rockwell: Yes. Yes.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: You went to Wake Forest College. You went there for four years?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: No. No. I went one year, and then transferred to Washington and Lee University.

Dr. Silveri: O. K. You graduated from there?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: No. I went two years to Washington and Lee, and then I dropped out, intending to go back and study law. I got involved in other things, and the First World War came on, and I enlisted. Instead of entering a law school, I got involved in the First World War.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Right away or before the country got into it? Or at that time

Dr. Silveri: (continued) before we got into it?

Paul Rockwell: August, 1914.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: You got involved in it in 1914?

Paul Rockwell: Yes.

Dr. Silveri: How?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: By going to France and enlisting in the French Army with my brother.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Why did you do that?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Well, because we were brought up differently from most people today. We had a love of history and a sense of gratitude to France for helping us in the War of Independence. I had a little chip on my shoulder because of about four hundred thousand Germans who fought in the Yankee Army against the South.

Between four hundred and four hundred and fifty thousand, they were not as good a class of Germans, I must say. They were sort of outcasts. A great many were the Communists of those days. Had no respect for private property, or family, or religion.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: When you and your brother went over to enlist, how did your mother feel about that?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: She didn't feel—we didn't ask her, I'm sorry to say!

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: You just told her that you were going to do it, and went off?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: We didn't tell her we were going to do it. We wrote her we had done it!

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: This is your brother, Kiffin?

Paul Rockwell: Yes.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: 1914. How did you get across? The war began in late August or early September.

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: No. The war began on the fourth day of August, 1914. On the seventh day of August, we were on a ship bound for France.

Dr. Silveri: Had you been reading in the papers about the upcoming storm?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: I have following it very closely. I was on the "Atlanta Constitution." I was a reporter on the "Constitution" in Atlanta at that time, and I followed it very carefully.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Let's backtrack. How many years were you a reporter on the "Atlanta Constitution?"

Paul Rockwell: A year.

Dr. Silveri; Just a year?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: About a year and a half.

Dr. Silveri: That was 1913 and 1914?

Paul Rockwell: 1913-1914.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Did you have a job before that?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: I was in the city directory publishing business with another man.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: In the City of Asheville?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Out of Asheville. The directories were printed in Asheville, but they were directories of other cities.

Dr. Silveri: And you were in that for a short period of time?

Paul Rockwell: Yes. Yes.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: O. K. Three days after the war began, you and your brother were on board a ship. What ship was that?

Paul Rockwell: St. Paul.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: American ship?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Yes. Well, it was under United States flag. It was really British owned, and the other sailing were all canceled.

<u>Dr. Silver:</u> Were there any other young American men on board that ship going over to do what you and your brother were going to do?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Let me see. There were some others there.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: O. K. You had no doubt in your mind that you would get a welcome reception over there and be accepted by the French?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Well, I had hoped so.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Was the ship crossing uneventful when you went over there?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>; It was crowded. Uneventful.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: I know that the submarine warfare hadn't started by that time?

Paul Rockwell: No, no. No, no. That's surface raiders that we were afraid of .

This was an American flag, see? The ship had a very, very interesting passenger list. I still have the passenger list, a great many very well-known names on it. It's full of especially British going back, called up, going back, to join up. There was people from all over.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: You were twenty-five years old when you were going over. Was your brother older or younger?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Younger. He was four years younger.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Neither of you had had any military experience before, had you?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: I hadn't. No. My brother went to Virginia Military Institute.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: What happened when you arrived in Europe? What did you do?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: We went immediately to the recruiting office and joined up.

Dr. Silveri: Where? In Paris?

Paul Rockwell: In Paris. Yes.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: What questions did they ask you?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Well, they looked at our passport and gave us a very thorough physical examination, the usual questions.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: It didn't bother them that you were an American citizen come to fight for them?

Paul Rockwell: It didn't bother me?

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: It didn't bother them?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: No questions asked. Although Wilson had declared his neutrality, we risked losing our citizenship. There are plenty of books on this subject. But they found out they couldn't take our nationality away. They can do it now and send you to prison, but then all they could do was threaten you. That didn't do any good.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Where did they place you then? You and your brother?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: They sent us to a barracks training school in the South of France for a month's training.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: In the infantry?

Paul Rockwell: Infantry. Yes.

<u>Dr. Silverir</u> Then after that month, what did you do?

Paul Rockwell: We went to the front.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: To the front after one month infantry--

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Well, they called for volunteers, and we all claimed we'd fought in various Mexican wars and so forth. Most of the Americans volunteered at the end of the month.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Were you able to train? You didn't know any French, did you?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: I had had three or four years of it.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Oh. So you got along pretty well.

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Well, I had to get accustomed to hearing it spoken, and I could read it, but I couldn't--it was difficult to make myself understood. I had had no practice. You have to have practice in speaking, you know.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: O. K. Then what happened? You went up to the front at what place? Where were you assigned to on the front?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: The front there in A-i-s-n-e.

Dr. Silveri: This was before the end of 1914?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: This was the end of September, the first week in October, I would say.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Were you there in the Battle of the Marne? The first battle?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: That was the end of the Battle of the Marne, cleaning up.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Cleaning up. We captured some Germans who had been

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: (continued) lost in the forest and so forth, that kind of thing. But the main fighting had already stabilized, become trench warfare very quickly.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Do you remember digging trenches, yourself?

Paul Rockwell: Yes.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: It was quite a race for the Channel, wasn't it? On both sides?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Yes. That was mostly between the British and the German. The Germans almost got there.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Then what did you do after that? Did you remain in that place for a long time?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: The winter. Stayed the winter. Yes.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Then what did you do?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Then I was injured and sent to the hospital, and my brother transferred to another regiment. In an attack north of Arras in May of 1915, he was wounded, shot through the leg and couldn't march. So, he volunteered for the air force and transferred to aviation and became one of the early French Aces.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>; While you remained on the ground?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>; I remained on the ground to a certain extent. I did some flying, but as a passenger, not as a pilot.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: How long were you in the hospital?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Three months—four months.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Three months. Then you went back on the front lines again?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: No. Then I got another job. Information. P. I.

Dr. Silveri: This is 1915?

Paul Rockwell: 1915.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: The U. S. is still not in the war. You remained at that information job for—

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Until the end of the war.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: O. K. What happened when the United States got into the war? Did you transfer?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: No. I had interest in transferring. I was very pleased where I was. Very pleased.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: So, you were in this position when the war ended in 1918?

Paul Rockwell: Yes.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Then did you immediately resign and go back home? \_

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: No. I lived in France for many years. Yes, I was liberated just before Christmas, and I had the flu and was very ill for six months. That flu that killed more people than the bullets did, dreadful thing. More of a plague than flu. Incidentally, they don't know what it was. Came from the East somewhere.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: In 1918. You didn't come back to the United States after the war? You stayed in France?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Well, I came back every three or four years to see my family.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: What did you do when you were in France?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: I wrote. Free-lance writer, mostly.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: What topic did you write about?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Mostly history of World War I. Flying and so forth. Wrote a great many articles and a book or two on the subject.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Did you live in Paris?

Paul Rockwell: Mostly.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Did you meet any of the famous American ex-patriots so-to-speak?

Paul Rockwell: I didn't care for it.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: You didn't like that group? The Hemingway Group? Ernest Hemingway?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: No. They became—well, I won't get on that subject. It would sound like jealousy maybe. I met some of them casually. My friends were mostly French. See, I had served in the French Army, and my first wife was French. Unless I knew the people already in this country, or had some reason, I didn't bother with them, frankly. You don't live in a foreign land just to see your own people. You travel in a foreign country, if you want to know anything. You want to find out something about other people, their way of living and doing things.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: You remained there through most of the 1920<sup>f</sup>s? You stayed in Europe for most of the 1920's?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: All the 1920's, part of the '30's. I've lived a good part of the time abroad since 1914.

Dr. Silveri: When did you come back to establish a residence in North Carolina?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Forty years ago!

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>:: Forty years ago.

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Oh Lord, no. It's been more than that. It was 1934, but I would go back to France almost every year for a while. Came back, and this was my main residence.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: You continued to go back. Did you continue to write for a living?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: I still do write a little, not so often.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: That was your main occupation? Was that your main occupation? Paul Rockwell: That was my main occupation. Yes.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: You came back in the 1930's. You also made trips back to Europe again. What about the world-wide depression of the 1930's? Did you see that all over the place?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: That was worse here than anywhere else, I believe.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Worse than in Europe?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Certainly worse than in France. It spread. It was later getting to Europe. Things always hit this country harder. We do everything with great enthusiasm. We go all out whether it's for depression,

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: (continued) or for so-called progress, or prosperity. We never, never do anything in an orderly, progressive manner!

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: So beginning in 1934, you more or less had your residence here in Asheville?

Paul Rockwell: Yes. 1934.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: You remained here throughout the Second World War? You resided here in Asheville?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: When the Second World War began, I returned to Europe with the French Army until it fell in June of 1940, and then I came back here in December of 1940 and got into the United States Air Force and went back overseas in 1942. Came back in 1946,

Dr. Silveri: You went to fight with the French in 1939?

Paul Rockwell: Yes.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: You were fifty years old then! At the time when a guy has a right not to have to go fight in a war, but you went back to your French compatriots over there.

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Well, I had many good friends and close ties, things I could do and did.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: What position did you have in the French Army in 1939?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Captain.

Dr. Silveri: Captain of Infantry?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Captain of Infantry. Yes.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: And you were there when Hitler came through the Ardennes Forests? Paul Rockwell: In France. Yes.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: When Hitler came through, were you on the front lines?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: No, no. No. I was at headquarters. I had a headquarters job.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: You know they write a lot about Charles DeGaulle and his book about the use of tanks and tank warfare, and that the French general staff really ignored it.

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: It's unfortunate that it was ignored although France was very poorly governed between the two wars, and they had a prime minister who was Leon Blum who wrecked France. He was virtually a Communist. The Air Minister, Pierre Cot, was an out and out, card-carrying Communist before 1939. Between them, they gave away all of the modern French arms to the Commies in Spain, when they were fighting Franco. All the latest French armament was sent down into Spain to the Reds, and also a great many lies were told about the state of affairs by the politicians. They blundered into the Second World War, which, with any kind of foresight, could have been avoided.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: You mentioned the Spanish Civil War. Did you have any urge to go and fight in that war?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Some. Yes.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: For the Republic? Right?

Paul Rockwell: NO! Hell, no! It was Communist!

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Oh, you would have fought on the side of Franco!

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: I certainly would! I'm a great admirer of Franco! Franco is the only man is history who's fought the Commies and beaten them, defeated them. He kept France out of the Second World War, which was quite a feat--

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: He kept Spain out of the war!

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: I mean he kept Spain out of the Second World War. He accepted aid from Hitler and Mussolini because that's the only aid he could get, but he paid them back in gold, not in men. He paid back ever dollar. Every peseta that Italy and Mussolini and Hitler advanced to Franco was repaid in gold. But he didn't send his men there, and he kept his country out of the Second World War, which would have been the end of Spain if they had gotten involved into the Second World War on either side. That would have completed the ruin of Spain.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Why was it that the Americans who did go fight in Spain joined The Lincoln Brigade and fought on the side of the Republic? Very few, if any, fought—

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Well, they were Communist. They were very far left. They were not a very desirable class of Americans. Very few of them really were authentic Americans who fought in the so-called Lincoln Brigade.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: What was the attitude of your French friends when you visited

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>; (continued)France during the 1930<sup>T</sup>s about that war?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: All my French friends were pro-Franco in the war. Of course, the leftists depending on what—all of my friends were rightists, conservatives.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: O. K. You were with the French Army when it fell, when Hitler knocked it out, but you were able to get back to America, though?

Paul Rockwell: I got back in time for Christmas through Spain and Portugal.

Dr. Silveri: O. K. That must have been a rough trip to get back home?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Well, it took some time, but it could be done.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Then you said later on when America got into the war, you joined the American Air Force?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: United States Air Force, yes.

Dr. Silveri: And went back to Europe?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Went back to Europe.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: What was your job in the Air Force?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: The Air Force? I was Chief Liaison with the French Air Force most of the time, from the time we landed in North Africa until the end of the hostilities.

Dr. Silveri: So, that would be from June, 1944 to the end of the war.

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Well, no. I landed at Mers-el-Kebér in November of 1942 in North Africa. In Algeria, to be exact.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Oh. In North Africa!

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: I came back to this country in 1946. So after the end of hostilities for a year, I was the head of the education program for the G. I 's in France. You see, we set up courses in six of the big French universities, at Sorbonne and five others, and then I set up sixteen trade and professional schools: cooking, dressmaking, interior decorating, and things at which France excels, which our G. I..'s unfortunately didn't take advantage of. So, we had to close the program down early in 1946. We couldn't get enough enrolled, in spite of the unique opportunity they had to get a free education in Europe.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: You were in North Africa for about two years, then?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Let's see. November, 1942. Just about, yes.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Two years. You came in shortly after the American and British.

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: I came in with the Americans . I had an office in North Africa for two years. I mean my headquarters were there, and part of the time in Italy, also. North Africa and Italy.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Well, in 1946 you came back to America. Did you resign your commission in 1946?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: I became a Reserve officer, a Colonel. I got out of the Air Force in 1946.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Came back to Asheville?

Paul Rockwell: To Asheville.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: What did you begin to do when you came back here?

Paul Rockwell: Well, I started my usual activities.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Let's see. You were almost sixty years old then. Came back in 1946. No, fifty seven years old when you came back from that war. Continued your activities. What about this house you're living in here now?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: My mother rented this house seventy years ago, and when it came on the market, she bought it. It's been in the family for seventy years now. That's a long time for Asheville!

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: This is the house you moved into when you came from South Carolina?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: This is the oldest house left in Asheville. This house was built in 1832. It's an old farmhouse.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: They have made so much of the Smith-McDowell house, but that's not as old as this one.

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: No, that's the oldest brick house in Asheville. It was built in 1840, they say. This one dates from 1832. It's an old wooden farmhouse. It's been altered, naturally, and added on to over the years on numerous occasions.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: She rented it first, and then she bought it. Your mother bought it, then?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: She bought it, yes. About 1910, I would say.

Dr. Silveri: The Rockwells have lived in it ever since 1910?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: We've lived in it for seventy years, really!

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: The neighborhood has changed drastically all around it, hasn't it?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: This was the last street in Asheville. Hillside Street was the last street, seventy years ago, in the City of Asheville. There were only four houses on Hillside Street. Beyond north and east of here, there were farms. To the north there were large farms. Winyah Sanatorium, behind us, had several hundred acres including the farm right behind it, changed enormously. The city has spread, I suppose, three or four miles north of here. Grace was a separate village. That was 'way out in the country. You would go out there in a horse and buggy, and then they eventually had a streetcar line running out there.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Now it's part of the City of Asheville.

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Now it's very much within the city. What end of town do you live in?

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Right up on Grace.

Paul Rockwell: On Grace. Yes.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: On Colonial Place right near the Post Office.

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Yes. Oh, yes. That was all Kimberly Farm, I suppose. I forget who owned all of that. It was a farm, though, and the little village of Grace.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: What about politics? What political party do you belong to? Need I ask?

Paul Rockwell: I take no interest in it, no part in it.

Dr. Silveri: No part at all?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: No part in it. No.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: I thought, with your background in the South, you would be an unreconstructed Democrat!

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: If the Democrats run a good man, I vote for him. If they don't run a good man, I don't vote. Oh, occasionally, I have always regretted it afterwards, on a few occasions I voted for Republicans. But every time I made a mistake. I voted for this fellow Holshouser, who's governor now. I thought Western North Carolina deserved to have a governor. He seemed like a solid man, but he's done nothing but make mistakes and play the dirtiest kind of politics ever since he got into office. I greatly regret that I voted for him. I had misgivings, but I would like to see this part of the state well represented always. I think we ought to have a governor occasionally from Western North Carolina.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: You mentioned before, I think before we had the tape on, that you regret many of the changes that have taken place in this region.

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: I regret most of the changes that have taken place. Asheville was a delightful city sixty years ago.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: What you don't like is the increase in population, and what all that has meant?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Yes. And over industrialization. Some part of the country in the world should be left fit for civilized people to live in! You should be able to have some good air to breathe. The air is polluted here., and it is

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: (continued) so filthy you have no idea the amount of work it takes to keep this room fit to sit in.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Where does that come from? The industrial plants?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Some comes from the industrial plants all around, especially from Enka, Champion, and all these other plants that are emitting poisonous vapors and fumes, dust, and particles of this and that twenty-four hours a day!

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: You never read about that in the newspaper, though, do you? The newspaper doesn't really tell us about it.

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Their hands are tied.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: In those long years that you've lived in Asheville, have you known any of those people associated with the newspaper and run the newspaper?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: I've known all of them!

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: All of them. Did you know D. Hiden Ramsey?

Paul Rockwell: Yes.

Dr. Silveri: What kind of fellow was he?

Paul Rockwell: I didn't care for him.

Dr. Silveri: You didn't care for him?

Paul Rockwell: No.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Everybody I talk with has glowing praise for him! You're the first one--

Paul Rockwell: Yes, well I knew him from about 1906 on. He was a shrewd

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: (continued) fellow and bright. Oh, he was bright! I wouldn't say that he was full of scruples, but he knew how to use other people, which was my estimate of him. I saw him do it all the time. He was a slick politician. He had his points. No doubt he had plenty of sense.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Were you in Asheville when the big land boom busted in the late 1920's?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: No. I was here for a few weeks in 1926, just before, when it was at its height, and a great many of my friends lost everything they had in the world in that boom.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: And when the depression hit, it made it even worse.

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: It made it even worse. Oh yes, yes. But a great many people, some of the most prosperous people in Asheville of the early part of the century, they lost everything in the boom. They began speculating. They wanted to add to their holdings instead of holding on to what they had and being contented with it as it increased in value, or selling out for cash. To begin with, the boom was mostly on paper. You couldn't pay cash. Well, it's the kind of thing that happened. One of the so-called developers of the period came and offered my mother two hundred and fifty thousand dollars for this house and lot in 1925 or 1926.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: A quarter of a million dollars for this house? How much land?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Two and a quarter acres. What his plans were, he was a stupid fellow, really. He was going to tear down the house and cut down the trees, and put up an apartment building. What would have happened if she

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: (continued) had sold to him, he had no money. He was going to give her notes. She would have had a mortgage on the property. He would have come in and destroyed this house and cut down the trees.

She would have had a bare piece of land here, and that's all. She would have lost her home. That's the kind of thing that happened all over the city. But she turned the offer down, didn't even consider it.

But oh, two hundred and fifty thousand dollars! You have no idea what things were selling for! I know of a piece of land down on Merrimon Avenue, a Mrs. Maloy, a very wealthy widow, her only son died in the First World War. Mrs. Maloy paid fifty thousand dollars for a little tiny lot just to round out her holdings, which she had inherited from her father, to make it a solid piece of real estate from Broadway to Merrimon. She paid fifty thousand dollars for just a corner angle. It wasn't worth it.

You couldn't get five hundred dollars for it today. She did things like that, her son being dead, no one to advise her. She died virtually on welfare from being one of the four or five largest property owners of the city. I can tell you the names of three or four other families that were wiped out like that. They got the fever, you know. When I was here in January and February of 1926, that's all you could hear in the talk was that they were buying and selling lots, all these transactions on paper. People would come up to me and say: "Now, Paul, when you get back to Paris, I want you to pick out for me one of the finest chateau in France. I'm coming over shortly to buy a chateau!" They never had a dime. It was

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: (continued) all in there imagination.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Did you know the Wolfe family? Tom Wolfe's family?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: He was much younger. I used to buy the "Saturday Evening Post" from him when he was a boy, a little boy much younger. Mabel, his sister, and old Mr. Wolfe.

<u>Dr. Silveri:</u> Do you remember him?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Oh, yes! He was a pretty heavy drinker.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Was it an accurate portrayal? When Tom Wolfe wrote his book, Look Homeward, Angel, were you here?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: No. Oh, no. I was living in Paris.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: The next time you came back was after he wrote that book. Did you read it?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Oh, a friend of mine, Mrs. Hazzard (long since dead) the mother of friends of mine, sent me a copy of the first edition, which I have somewhere. She had underlined parts of it. The Hazzards were in it, and my brother and I were in it. I read it, and thought, well, it's one of these local books, you know, of local interest. I had no idea it was a masterpiece and that it would live! There are some wonderful passages in it.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: You didn't get mad at what you read in there? There wasn't anything you read that got you upset about the whole book, was there?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: No, but I could see things in it that got a lot of people I knew, that I was friendly with, upset. He crucified a good many people.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Was he unjustified? Was he telling the truth about these people?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Mabel, his sister, told me years afterwards, "You know, when Tom wrote that book about us, we were heartbroken. But looking back on it, we ought to be very grateful to him. To begin with, we were nothing. We were just a poor, unknown, obscure family, and he put us on the map! Secondly, there were so much worse things about us that he could have told, but didn't tell! "

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>:: That was probably the case of a lot of other people that he talked about in that book!

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: That's probably the case, yes.

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: No. I never did see him after that, that I can recall. I was living away. His first cousin, Henry Westall—he crucifies Henry in the Book. Tom was of a very envious, jealous nature. He was envious of everybody who had fared a little better in life than he. He especially hated Henry because Henry's father had made a lot of money in the lumber business. Henry felt very pleased with that, and he sort of looked down upon the Wolfes.

After the book appeared, about two or three weeks later Henry came around to the Wolfe home, according to Mabel Wolfe. (She told me this later) When Henry came around, he had been drinking pretty heavily, and she said, "Henry, what do you think of that book Tom's written about the family?"

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: (continued) She said, "You can't take anything like that!" He said, "I do! It's a wonderful book. The best book I ever read! Until Tom wrote that book about us, I thought I was the only Son-of-a-Bitch in the family!"

[End of Side I]

Paul Rockwell: That's Mabel's story.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>; The next time you came back to Asheville, you must have encountered a lot of people talking about the book and being very upset about the book, right?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: No. I would say it took some time. It was so long before I came back after it appeared that the commotion had died down somewhat, the resentment.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: I understand now that Pack Library would not carry his book for a long time.

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: For a long while. Yes, yes. I wasn't here when that feeling was going on.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Did you say Tom Wolfe mentioned you and your brother in the book?

Paul Rockwell: Yes.

Dr. Silveri: In what way?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: He called us "Paul and Clifford Wheeler " I believe, in the book. Something about my brother being killed in the French Air Force and so forth. <u>Dr. Silveri</u>: You never met Mrs. Wolfe?\_

Paul Rockwell: Vaguely. I never knew her

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Did your mother ever take in boarders in this house?

Paul Rockwell: No. No. No

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Asheville being quite a resort area, there were a lot of old boarding houses.

Paul Rockwell: Oh, it was full of them! More boarding houses than anything else, and some were very good. They were noted for the good food they served. How comfortable the rooms were, I don't know, but they certainly--some of the good women took great pride in their cooking and had good colored cooks in those days. Certain types of food were more abundant than today, country-cured hams and meats, and you could get quail and other game. I would say that the quality of the food perhaps was better than today. The variety was not as great. You didn't get all of these things that are flown in or brought in from all over the world. But for food, substantial, everyday food, I believe that you lived better sixty years ago, by far, than today!

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: What about race relations in Asheville?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: They were much better fifty years ago than they are today!

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Fifty years ago?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Much, much better. I would say the racial relations in Asheville have deteriorated continually since the Second World War.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: What's the reason for that?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>; I would say there has been a great deal of underground work going on, so I'm told. That problem is our weak point in this country. That's the problem that our enemies, who would destroy our nation, concentrate on. That's the best thing they can bring up in this country.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Were you in favor of the Supreme Court decision in 1954?\_ Paul Rockwell: No.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: You were against that? Why?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: I knew it wouldn't work out. It has not worked out. All it has brought is increasing dissension and trouble, and I don't know where it is all going to end. I've never had any trouble in my life with the colored people. I was born among them. I suppose the first time I opened my eyes, there probably was an old colored servant in the room.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Did you know this City Manager back a few years by the name of Weldon Weir? Did you know Weldon Weir, the City Manager? \_

Paul Rockwell: Oh, yes. Yes, the City Manager.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: What about him?

Paul Rockwell: Very controversial. I, personally, found him very cooperative. I never had any trouble with him at all. I have never had to go to him about a problem without him trying to help out. He was certainly very public spirited, I'll tell you. I was Chairman of the Centennial, the Confederate War Centennial Committee, in Buncombe County. We were having a great commemoration of the Battle of Asheville in April of 1965, the Hundredth Anniversary, and invited guests from all of the ex-Confederate

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>; (continued) States and so forth and having quite a ceremony. The committee had been assured that funds were available to meet the expenses, and suddenly I found that this person who said she had collected two thousand dollars (she since has died), she was overly optimistic. When I put it up to her to pay this two thousand dollars, ten dollars was all she had collected! So, we had made commitments of several hundred dollars.

I went to Weldon Weir and to Coke Candler, who was County Chairman of the County Commissioners, and told them the mess we were in. We had invited these distinguished guests from all over the country, and they said, "Don't worry about it at all! Just any expenses that are necessary, send us the bill, and the city and the county will pay!"

They underwrote this affair, and it was very successful. We had quite a commemoration of the Hundredth Anniversary of the Battle of Asheville and of the war with all the ex-Confederate States represented. The bills were all paid by Weldon Weir and Coke Candler. I mean the county and the city.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: You said he was controversial. Why was Weldon Weir controversial?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: I don't know. They claimed he had a very powerful political machine, but as I have never taken sides one way or the other, I have, and still have, friends in both parties, and I don't get into any arguments about them because I don't see much difference between the two parties, at least locally.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Have you known Charles "Buzz" Tennent over the years? Charles Tennent? "Buzz" Tennent?

Paul Rockwell: I've known him just about seventy years, I suppose!

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Seventy years! He's been involved in a lot of civic affairs, hasn't he?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Oh yes. Yes. I haven't seen "Buzz", though, in two or three years.

How is he?

Dr. Silveri: He's doing fine. Yes.

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Is he all right? Is he up and about?

Dr. Silveri: Yes. Yes.

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: I haven't seen him in certainly two years. Yes, he's a good man. He's done a lot of good around here.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: I wanted to ask you. Have you ever served on any local or state or national boards or commissions?

Paul Rockwell: Have I?

Dr. Silveri: Yes. Have you ever served on any city boards or city--

Paul Rockwell: I've never served on anything political, but I have been on many, many organizations as president or chairman. I'm chairman right now of the Buncombe County Bi-centennial Committee, President of the Asheville Branch of the English Speaking Union, which is not as active as it once was. I'm past president of the Western North Carolina Historical Association. I've served on many boards and committees, constantly being put on new ones, but I've got to turn them down from now on.

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: (continued) They are too fatiguing.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: What about the mountain people? Do you have very much contact with the mountain people? What is your opinion of them?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Well, it depends on--I have some wonderful friends among them, and there are some others I've had trouble with. I have a couple of farms out in the Blue Ridge Mountains, and some of my neighbors up there--I was up there just last Sunday. Some of the people, you won't find any finer people on earth. Then the rest are shiftless trash, just about as low as you will find on earth, but there are fewer and fewer of them. There are some remarkably fine people.

They are, unfortunately, being weakened like the city people by this thing over here. I've never turned it on in my life! I don't even know how! My son thought we were underprivileged and insisted on installing it for us. My wife turns it on occasionally, but I've never turned it on, this T. V. Brain washing twenty-four hours a day, so that's had a very bad influence, I think, out in the rural communities, and it's inspired too many young people with the desire to move to the big cities.

Also, fewer and fewer people plant their own gardens. I noticed this year that more gardens are being planted, but not too many. Before World War II, every farmer raised some hogs, had his own cows and milk, and had his own garden. But I can see plenty of them out here fifteen-twenty miles from town who don't have any garden. They don't have any chickens, they don't have any pigs, they don't have any cows. They buy everything at

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: (continued) the supermarket.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Yes. There has been a great change. What counties do you have your farms in, that you are talking about? What counties?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: It's in Buncombe County, Fairview township.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: What about some of the industrial leaders around Asheville? Did you know any of them? Did you know Claude Ramsey?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Yes. I knew Claude The young one? I knew his parents.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: That's a local family, isn't it?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Yes. That's a local family. He's Hiden Ramsey's nephew. I'm told he's a very able man. I haven't seen him since he was a boy.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Did you know the Robertsons?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Very well. Very well.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: It was Reuben Robertson.

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Robertson.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Robertson, yes. The one who got Champion Paper Company underway, right?

Paul Rockwell: He's the one who started it. His father-in-law, Peter Thomson sent him down here in the early 1900's to start it. See, then we had these hundreds of miles in all directions of virtually virgin forests to tap. He came down from Ohio, with no idea about conservation or anything. Did a great deal of destruction, totally useless pollution before he finally was told of better ways to do things. In his later years he tried to undo some of evil that he did, and others, the spoiling of the Pigeon River, for

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: (continued) example, turning all of that poison into it. I think he repented toward the end. He didn't know. We knew nothing about such problems, and no one realized that there's a limit. You can't destroy without replacing. If you nothing but destroy, cut down and waste your forests, you end up with a desert. If you do nothing but mine your coal and use it usp, and find no way of replacing that energy, there comes a time when your descendants are up against it.

We are about reaching that period now in this country. This is the most wasteful and destructive nation the world has ever seen! The odd thing is mat we have learned nothing from the old countries. They have had to learn in Italy, in France, in Spain, in Germany, and in Britain. They have to learn a little about conservation. We are just beginning to, a few people are beginning to realize the necessity of waking up and beginning to protect and conserve instead of to exploit and destroy and waste. But you are called an enemy of progress if you talk like that openly.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Well, there are those people when I raise the question of "How can people live in Canton with the terrible stench that comes from that plant"?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: How can they do? Three weeks ago I had a vision of hell. I rode on a train from Paris to Luxemburg, and it switched about and went through parts of Belgium and a highly industrialized part of France and of Luxemburg. I'm going to tell you it was simply frightful! It was worse than the midlands of England. All of that has happened since World War II. It

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: (continued) was nearly as bad. It was bad enough before World War II. Have you taken the trip from Murphy to Chattanooga?

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: No, I haven't.

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: If you want to see something--are you interested in conservation?

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Is that the area where they did the copper mining? And it's nothing but a desert there?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Yes. Yes. Have you not seen that?

Dr. Silveri: I've seen pictures of it.

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: You see it. It's the most shocking thing I've ever seen in my life! I haven't been back through it in then years, but it's heartbreaking. But they say it's not improved.

You go down to Murphy, and then you take that road (I forgot the number). It's an education. I think that every industrialist who is planning to come into Western North Carolina to set up a plant should be forced to spend two weeks over at Duck town, and to just ride around on all the roads and to see what industry, mining, destruction, and lack of foresight can to do to a region!

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Practically nothing is growing there, right?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Nothing! Well, it's the worse thing I've seen in two World Wars! It's worse than the destruction I've seen brought about by bombings, shelling, and fighting. It was worse than a certain region in the Champagne area of France which was fought over without let up for four

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: (continued) years in 1918.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: They did this through mining? Mining of copper?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>; Mining of the copper. Just go and take a look at it for your own education!

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Conservation and the environment seem to be one of your main interests, preserving the environment.

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: It is! It's one of my main interests, feat and the preservation of the story of our past. If we can't learn anything from the past, then we're doomed for the future.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: I noticed that you wrote an introduction to the <u>Photographic</u> Book on Asheville.

Paul Rockwell: Yes.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Gave an introduction for that. Do you have anything to do with the Appalachian Consortium?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Yes, in a way. That is to say I was chairman of a committee recently which gave them an award, the Western North Carolina Historical Association Achievement Award. We gave them our cup some months ago for their work, which I think never was a cup better merited. I think they are on the right path there. Are you active in that?

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: I'm a member of the Historical Association, but not in that. UNC -A is not a member of the Consortium.

Paul Rockwell: It isn't?

Dr. Silveri: No. I think they may become a member sometime in the near

Dr. Silveri: (continued) future.

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: I think it would be quite worthwhile for them to become a member. From all I know of it, I think it is attempting a very, very useful and really a very necessary work.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Do you know George Myers Stephens?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Yes. I've known him all his life, knew his parents before him.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Knew his parents? He had a very interesting career with the Stephens Press.

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: He has the Stephens Press. Oh, yes. I know George. I've known him since he was a boy. I can't remember when I first saw him. He's another generation; I'm a generation ahead of him.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: How about the Norburn family? Did you know the two doctors? Charles?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Yes. Charles and Russell. I know them very well. Every once in awhile, Russell and I go out together on an excursion.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Do you know Dr. Polly Shuford? \_

Paul Rockwell: Yes. Very well.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Have you known her for a number of years?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Well, I can't remember when I didn't know her hardly. I remember when she was a girl, and her brother, George, was a very good friend of mine. He's dead now.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: He used to be a judge and a Member of Congress.

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Yes. He was a member, and one of the worse mistakes he ever made. He was forced into it by some of the ring afraid someone else was going to get it, so they forced George to run. Put him in and elected him. It didn't do him any good. He was a nice fellow.

Dr. Silveri: He was only in for two or three terms, I think.

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: I think two terms. Yes. He died. Died while in office, I believe. <u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Does any particular person stand out in the development of Asheville and Buncombe County in the last fifty years that you could point to? Civic leader that has done a great deal of good?

Paul Rockwell: Well, I think one of the brightest persons and the best informed men they have ever had in Asheville was the editor of the Asheville Citizen, long since dead, Theodore B. Harris. Theodore Brower Harris died in 1927, but he had just about one of the best minds of anyone who's ever lived in Asheville and did a great deal of good. He wrote. He was the City Editor of the paper for years before he became Editor in Chief. He wrote a great many very constructive articles prior to 1927, say from about 1912, for about fifteen years. I think he had a good deal of influence in his writing. I don't know. We've had some fine people here, but I don't know in what particular line.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: How about the development of the Asheville-Biltmore College that later on became UNC-A? Who are the people responsible for that?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: I think probably Dr. Highsmith has done more for the development of it than anyone I've know. I've known them all. I think he is responsible for building it up, and I hope he's got it on a good foundation. I don't keep up with it well enough. I would say Dr. Highsmith has done a very fine job there.

Dr. Silveri: Let's talk about some of the North Carolina people, and particularly some of the political leaders and so on that you have been around a long time. You've been pretty much aware of the governors of North Carolina and what they have or haven't done or other political leaders. I guess before your time the education governor was known as Governor Aycock, did a lot for education way back around the turn of the century.

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: There's no doubt but what he did a great deal. From all I've heard and read, I never met him, but he was a very foresighted man. There's no doubt of that.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: How about Kerr Scott, Bob Scott's father, that was governor back, I think, in the 1930's? W. Kerr or Karr Scott? \_

Paul Rockwell: Scott?

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Don't remember that?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: I've heard of him, know about him, but if I've met him, I can't say.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: You were probably out of the country most of that time.

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: A good part of the time, yes.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: How about Terry Sanford? Did you know Governor Terry Sanford?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Yes. I know him. He's very pleasant. I wish he would stick to his job as chancellor or president of Duke University and keep out of politics. I think maybe he's outworn his welcome as a politician. I don't know. He's a very able man, very pleasant.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: You know, it's interesting. You've traveled around the world and so on, but yet you've come back to Asheville to live. Why did you come back to live here?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: I think Asheville has perhaps the best all-year-around climate that I know of, and in many ways it's a very pleasant place. Then somehow or other, I'm a traditionalist. I've been here a long while, off and on, for over seventy-seven years. So, I don't know, maybe it's just the homing-pigeon instinct or something.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Did you ever have any children?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Oh yes, yes. I have children.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Do they live around here?

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: Well, one of them is a professor. He's on the faculty at Duke University, Duke Medical School, and also he is the head of the student mental health services for all of the university, which is a hopeless job, of course. He's got twenty younger doctors and nurses under him. You know what a student body today is like. You've come in contact with them enough to know.

<u>Paul Rockwell</u>: (continued) A great many of them need help from time to time, more and more, I think the burden of higher education becomes increasingly more difficult to cope with for the youth, and we've got so many young people in college and university that should not be there. They have got no business there to begin with, but they think that's the thing to do. That's the thing that's going to put them ahead in the world, which it's not unless they've got something more than an education. It's a pretty hopeless job.

I have a daughter, who is presently in Canada with one of our grandchildren. She lives in Asheville. And a son who's dead.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: I suppose we could go on for hours and hours, but we're going to have to stop sometime. You've given me—

Paul Rockwell: Well, you haven't gotten very much that I can see.

<u>Dr. Silveri</u>: Well, there are many things that I have gotten that I can tie in with a lot of other people I have interviewed. I want to thank you very much for your time.

Paul Rockwell: Well, I've enjoyed seeing you.

[The End]