

# Mississippi Oral History Program

Simpson County Historical and Genealogical  
Oral History Project

An Oral History

with

Jack Pace

Interviewer: Joe White

Volume 1217, Part 22  
2003

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*An Oral History with Jack Pace, Volume 1217, Part 22*

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## Biography

Jack Alfred Pace was born to Malcolm Pace and Gladys Long in Conehatta, Newton County in March 1917. He is the oldest of six children. After graduating from Philadelphia High School, Pace went to Decatur, East Central Junior College on a football scholarship. He contracted malaria fever before starting school. Pace moved to Hattiesburg in November 1937, took out a loan for \$200, and bought a service station. He was drafted into the Army in March 1942. Stationed at Camp Shelby for a short term, Pace was then transferred to Fort Knox, KY for basic training. He was deployed to Liverpool, England, then France, Holland, and eventually Stolberg, Germany. He was stationed in Berlin after Germany's surrender. Pace spent a total of two years overseas.

After returning from World War II, Pace, who was working for the Sinclair Refining Company at the time, married Mary Louise Barksdale in March 1946. They met while she was a student at The University of Southern Mississippi. Together they had two children, a son and a daughter. Both children work at a wholesale plant; his son serves as manager, his daughter as the administrator. Pace joined the American Legion soon after returning from Europe. He became state commander of the legion, and later ran (successfully) for the state senate. He was elected in 1959 and inaugurated in January 1960. He served from 1960-64 and then from 1969-72. Mississippi's ban on the selling of alcohol was overturned during Pace's first term.

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AN ORAL HISTORY  
with  
JACK PACE

*This is an interview for the Mississippi Oral History Program of The University of Southern Mississippi Simpson County Project. The interview is with Jack Pace and is taking place on August 23, 2003. The interviewer is Joe White.*

**White:** —White. Today is Saturday, August 23, 2003. This interview is conducted under a grant from the Mississippi Humanities Council as a part of the oral history project directed by The University of Southern Mississippi. Today we're interviewing Mr. Jack Pace at his home in Magee. Mr. Pace, could you tell us what your full name is, please, sir?

**Pace:** Jack Alfred Pace.

**White:** Jack Alfred Pace. And when were you born, Mr. Pace?

**Pace:** March 9, 1917.

**White:** Nineteen seventeen. My dad was born in 1911, I believe. You weren't born in Simpson County, though, were you?

**Pace:** No. Born in Conehatta, Newton County.

**White:** And what was your dad's name?

**Pace:** Well, he only had one name, and it was Malcolm, but he used M.M. as his rightful signature.

**White:** Needed another initial there, huh?

**Pace:** Needed another, and so he used M.M., though he only was named Malcolm Pace.

**White:** We've interviewed a couple of people who didn't have a middle name and had to make up an initial for it.

**Pace:** Well, he did that.

**White:** We interviewed one man named James Smith. For obvious reasons he had to come up with an initial. And what was your mother's name?

**Pace:** Gladys Long, L-O-N-G.

**White:** Gladys Long. Was she from that area, also?

**Pace:** She was from Philadelphia. She had a sister that lived down in Newton County, Conehatta, somewhere there. She went to visit her sister and met my daddy, and that's how they got together. (laughter)

**White:** Well, you didn't explain what he was doing over there at her sister's house. (laughter)

**Pace:** I think it started after she got there.

**White:** Oh, is that right? (laughter) That's the way it went, huh?

**Pace:** Yeah.

**White:** What did your folks do? What did your daddy do for a living?

**Pace:** My daddy was a farmer when I was a youngster, and then he went into construction work during—well, he was a farmer during the Depression years. And then later on he got into highway building, construction. During the war, airport construction, such like.

**White:** He moved around.

**Pace:** A lot of moving.

**White:** Moved all over the country, or mostly the South?

**Pace:** Well, mostly the Southeast, Georgia and Alabama and Mississippi.

**White:** Did you have any brothers and sisters?

**Pace:** He had sisters, but he didn't have any brothers. He had a brother and a sister die with—when they were youngsters, there was a fever that was deadly, and they got that fever and died. He had two sisters survive, and he was the only boy.

**White:** Where'd you go to school? Over around Conehatta?

**Pace:** No. They moved from Conehatta to Philadelphia when I was a year old, and I went to school at Philadelphia High School, finished and graduated from Philadelphia High School.

**White:** Well, I don't mean to move you too fast, but while we're talking about education, where'd you go on to college from there?

**Pace:** I had a football scholarship to Decatur, East Central Junior College. Went down there two weeks before school started, to get into practice, evidently stirred up my system, and I took malaria fever. I had a real thing. And Coach Pat Wilson who was later the attorney general for Mississippi was the coach at Decatur. And his wife sat up in my room in the dormitory, just like my mother, nursed me back to health. And well, when I got able to travel, I went to Philadelphia because a member of my church in Philadelphia, Methodist Church, had called down there when he heard I was sick and told me he had me a job if I was unable to go to school. So that appealed to me, and I ran back to Philadelphia when I was able. That job was with Turner Hardware, one of the old, established merchants in Philadelphia. And I made seven dollars a week. Well, I progressed a little bit. I got an offer from Hayes(?) Pharmacy for eight dollars a week. I went over there. Later I got one from Soor's(?) Department Store for nine dollars a week. Now, this all happened within one year. Called myself being promoted, I guess.

**White:** You moved pretty fast, didn't you? (laughter)

**Pace:** I sure did, yeah. Had my eye on the money, but it wasn't much money. (laughter)

**White:** Well, they a lot of people, probably weren't making eight dollars a week then.

**Pace:** A lot of them didn't have a job.

**White:** What type things did you do in the stores?

**Pace:** Well, in the hardware store, it was what you think, plumbing, electrical, hunting lights. There was a lot of hunting back then, coons and possums. And in the pharmacy, it was waiting on the front and the soda fountain and so forth. And in the department store, it was just selling clothes, ladies' side, men's side. So it was general clerking in the department store.

**White:** Well, you got on back into college, I think—

**Pace:** I did.

**White:** —at some point, didn't you?

**Pace:** I did. After World War II when the VA [Veterans Administration] set up these extension colleges, [University of] Southern [Mississippi] had one here at Magee, and I went to that for four years. I had come here to go in business.

**White:** Do you remember what year you came to Simpson County?

**Pace:** Ninety forty-six, August the tenth.

**White:** August 10, 1946.

**Pace:** I have two children. My daughter was born December the sixteenth, 1946, here in Magee, and I was trying to get in the wholesale business. I had built my plant and the big tanks and all that, and I was working on my first service station.

**White:** In the gasoline and oil (inaudible).

**Pace:** In the gasoline, oil, grease, tires, you name it. And I remember so well, my wife said she didn't know whether I was more interested in the date my daughter was born or the twenty-third of December when I opened my first service station. (laughter) My attention was divided.

**White:** Toss up there, huh?

**Pace:** Yeah.

**White:** Well, you mentioned your wife. We might ought to get you married off. When did you get married, and who did you marry?

**Pace:** I married March the twenty-third, well, right after the war. It was [19]46, March 23, 1946, Mary Louise Barksdale from Morton. We had first met when she was a student at Mississippi Southern [University of Southern Mississippi], and I had a service station in Hattiesburg. I had left Philadelphia after that nine-dollars-a-week job and come to Hattiesburg to go in a service station with my daddy's youngest sister's husband. My aunt called up there and told me her husband couldn't seem to get anybody honest to work for him in the service station. If I wanted it, they'd pay me fifteen dollars a week, and I could live with them until I got situated.

**White:** How old were you at that time? And that was after that first year that you had—

**Pace:** That was the first year that I got out of the—well, it was before the war. There's four years right in there. It was November 20, 1937, that I went to Hattiesburg, and I was drafted into the Army March 3, 1942, so I had to sell out my little station. But I was single, and I was ambitious. I—

**White:** Yeah. You had doubled your salary there in a year.

**Pace:** Oh, boy. I was getting along by then. But the first money I ever borrowed in my life, I got a chance to buy this same station in June, and I went to the (inaudible) system. I'm a newcomer in Hattiesburg. I didn't know many people, and I borrowed \$200, and they let me have \$180. They kept twenty on the front end, and that's the hardest money I ever paid back in my life. (laughter) So much a month. But then I was in that station almost four years. I was drafted in March, where I'd started in it in June. So I had to sell everything I had and go off with Uncle Sam.



**White:** You remember who you sold it to?

**Pace:** Yes, very well. His name skips me now. When you get eighty-six, you'll have that problem. (laughter)

**White:** I have that problem right now. I guarantee you.

**Pace:** I can see him, but I can't call his name. I'll get it a little later.

**White:** You're liable to think of his name in just a few minutes. But you went off to the service. Where were you—

**Pace:** I went to Camp Shelby, inducted at Camp Shelby, and man, they put me on KP, kitchen police. And I'd go on at 3:30, four o'clock in the morning and peel potatoes all day long into the night, nine or ten o'clock. And it looked like I was hung up there. Of course about a week of it seemed to me like a year.

**White:** I bet it did. (laughter)

**Pace:** Then I was called to take my test, aptitude test that they'd give when you entered. And lo and behold, when I walked in there to take my test, there's my next-door neighbor and friend, Herman Alford(?) who was running the deal. (laughter) He had been in the National Guard, and he goes in as an officer, and I'm a private at the bottom. And he asked me if I wanted to help him. I said, "Man, I want to help anybody to get out of that kitchen." (laughter) So he put me to handing out test papers and pencils and that sort of thing, and I was up in the world then. But I didn't stay there long till they shipped me off to Fort Knox, Kentucky, for what they called basic training. (laughter) Now, your aptitude test is supposed to tell them something about assigning, you know?

**White:** If they ever read it, huh?

**Pace:** Yeah. And lo and behold, they put me in motorcycle school. I had ridden behind one guy, one time, and he scared me to death, and here I am in motorcycle school. And I still avoid—(phone rings) Excuse me. (brief interruption)

**White:** All right.

**Pace:** I had to spend eight weeks in what they called motorcycle school, and I got to where I could tear it down and put it back together blindfolded, almost, and yet I still haven't ridden one. Well, when I finished that basic training motorcycle school, right down behind the building was a track where they taught us to ride them. And they governed your cycle down to about thirty miles an hour so you couldn't get hurt. And I kind of got where I could ride it, but I was scared of it as a bear. And then I was assigned to the Eighth Armored Division in Fort Knox. Hadn't been in there very

long, and when they had what they called a road march. And you string out a whole division on a road, say, to Elizabeth Town, Kentucky. Instead of pavement, it was slag about that deep, and there was two of us on a motorcycle, supposed to be as a liaison for the general there in that half-track, sending messages back down the line. And my partner on the other motorcycle, I think he was born on one. He could stand up and ride it. And he consoled me and says, “Don’t worry about it. I’ll catch all the messages.” And he did, and I’m doing my best just to ride with a big sub-Thompson machine gun up here in a holster and a big bed roll back behind. And that thing had about as much balance as a two-legged dog. (laughter) He caught all these messages. I was just riding along. The next vehicle to me is the general and an Eagle colonel who’s his aide, the sure-enough big brass. And he kept catching those things, and he’d get back, and they’d hand him—like they did at the depot—a stick with a note on it. And you reach up and get it and read it and do what it says. And of course he was gone one time on one of those missions when they stuck that stick out. Wasn’t anybody to get it but me. (laughter) And I’m in that slag, and I pull along, upside of the half-track that they’re standing up in, and your accelerator is your left handlebar. And when I reached up to get that note, that accelerator (laughter), man, I just dived. That motorcycle went off the road, down the bank, with me. And I said, “Lord, have mercy. I done stuck that handlebar in my side.” And I looked around there, and it wasn’t in my side. So then I got sort of fretted, and I jumped on that bugger, idled it down and got on it and just almost went in the ditch on the other side of the road, right behind them. They’d stopped the traffic.

**White:** They were watching you at that point.

**Pace:** They were. I was the show. (laughter) And that convoy didn’t travel but two or three hundred yards, and the old general stopped it, and he gets out of that half-track, and here he’s coming back here, walking toward me. Man, and I was a private in the rear ranks, and here comes a two-star general. I was scared to death. And he just walked up in front of me and said, “Soldier, you hurt?” “No, sir.” “Well,” he says, “what’s that on your shoes and on your legs?” I was solid blood.

**White:** Oh, man.

**Pace:** The chambers on that motorcycle was out here in front of your legs, and of course I had just cleaned the point of them. He says, “Now, you’ll be able to ride that thing.” The general talking. Says, “When I first got in the service, they put me in the cavalry, and that horse threw me and liked to killed me. I got back up on him and got that scoundrel, and I haven’t been thrown since.” So he gave me a lesson in it.

**White:** Did it work? (laughter)

**Pace:** Well, it worked. There’re two times they’ll hurt you, before you learn how and after you think you’re good. (laughter) I had two or three more skirmishes. I always respected them, but they didn’t get over there in Europe to the war. I didn’t see a

motorcycle except Germans. They used them. America, Allies used jeeps. I didn't ride a motorcycle over there.

**White:** Jeep didn't fall over near as badly, did it?

**Pace:** No. (laughter) That jeep could get around just about anywhere a motorcycle could, and had four feet on the ground.

**White:** Where all were you stationed in Europe?

**Pace:** I left Boston, ended up at Liverpool, England. Of course it was during all the bombing and total blackout. Got on a train and rode all night, across England. Ended up on the English Channel, loaded in an English boat to go across the channel, and up comes a storm, and we sit there and rock, about three days in that channel and then go into what we called the Apple Orchards of France where it seemed like it rained every day. And we was there in tents. At night you was like in your bedroll; next morning you're liable to have mud up around you. But we were waiting for our tanks, half-tracks and all that stuff, waiting for your equipment. So that's why we were in France. And when the equipment arrives—and during the time we're there, three meals a day of soup. Go for your chow, and you have your aluminum cup, and they'd pour you some—I thought it was English pea soup. I don't know what it was, but that's what you had, three times a day.

**White:** Same kind of soup, three times?

**Pace:** Same thing, three meals, for about two or three weeks, and in comes the equipment, and boy, did they get us on the move. We leave France, headed for Holland. The Germans were trying to come around through Holland. They was supposed to cut that off, or something, as best I understood it. By then I'm a sergeant. (laughter) All the news I got was the *Stars and Stripes* to tell us where we were and what we were doing. And we went through Paris at night; looked like everybody in France was lined up on the road, greeting us. And we got to Holland, and they bivouacked us, stopped. That tide had been turned, so we stopped there, and we in a line, up and down through the woods, headquarters, A Company, B Company, and C Company, D Company. Well, headquarters was on the far end. And I think it'd been about two weeks since I'd had a bath; looked like we was going to have twenty-four hours, two days, and I just walked out of there, started up through yonder, didn't know where I was going. Had my musette bag full of candy and chewing gum and cigarettes and all the things that those people over there wanted. And I was going somewhere and try to get a bath; didn't know where. Be dogged, about a mile or two over there, walking, I walked up on a spacious layout, beautiful grounds, big chateau right down there. That didn't faze me. I walked up to it just like I owned it. (laughter) It had doors, must have been ten of them, across the front, and I had a time, deciding which one to knock on, try to get somebody's attention. And when I did, I knocked, and here comes a butler, all attired in their clothing. I said, "Boy, I'm getting up in the world, here." And he didn't know a thing about English, and I didn't

know a thing about what he was saying. So we wasn't doing too good, but back down the hall, the lady of the house hollered whatever his name was. Said, "I'll handle it, Joe." And she comes to the door, and she could speak English better than I could, a real nice lady, very courteous. And the knees of my pants, standing up, was way out there. I just, I was in bad need of a bath. I told her what I needed. She said to him, "You go up there and light that heater and get that ready for a bath." So he does. And I just took a change of clothes with me. I was going to throw these away. And I got that bath, and I got in my fresh clothes, felt pretty good. Came downstairs. By then, Papa'd come home. He'd been in Liege on a mission. Here, he and Mama, sitting down there, waiting for me to come down, and they had a little daughter, about fifteen or sixteen, pretty, little, old thing. But they were all ears and eyes. They wanted me to talk. Dewey and Roosevelt had a heated race on for president. And this gentleman was in the manufacturing business. He had a plant in Cologne that was obliterated. He had one in the United States in Buffalo, New York, and he had another one somewhere. But anyway Dewey was the United States attorney. He said, "I'm glad I don't have to vote over there. I'd be obligated to Tom Dewey, but I'd want to vote for Roosevelt." And he said, "I wish I'd have brought some cards back with me from Liege for you." And I never thought no more about it. He says, "Now, during the German occupation, my family lived out there in that carport." Had two Packard automobiles parked out there. Says, "They took this house, the German Air Force." But he said, "I managed to hide two bottles from them. We'd better break out one of those." (laughter) I bet you I hadn't drunk a half a pint in all my life, but I was sociable there, a little bit. But it meant a lot to him. And I had a good visit, and then I go back to my outfit. Overnight we're getting ready tomorrow, so far as we know, to move again. And early that morning, they began to holler, "Sergeant Pace." We're at the end of the bivouac area. From up at the front, each company, "Sergeant Pace." Lord, I didn't know what was up.

**White:** Thought you was in trouble, huh?

**Pace:** Man! I thought I had deep trouble. Well, it turns out this family's daughter on a snow white horse had brought me some Belgian postcards. Her daddy went to town, had got them, and she rides down there to bring them to me. Oh, boy, I was something in that battalion. (laughter) They wanted to know how that came about and all that stuff. But right after that, they moved us to Stolberg, Germany, and that's where we entered the big show.

**White:** That's when the major invasion of Germany began—

**Pace:** That's right.

**White:** —that ended the war.

**Pace:** And man, that was something else. Every step you made, you'd better watch; you'd lose a leg on a mine. And my little lieutenant got in the Army through the National Guard, and here he was a first lieutenant and the kind of person that you

wouldn't wipe your feet on. He was just ignorant, but still he was the boss. And he got hurt, right off the reel. Something run over his foot, but he told us, "Now, we just entered Stolberg. Get these half-tracks lined up." We had mobile mortars. You shot them out of the half-track. And all hell was going on, up yonder on that hill, both sides. And here we line up like we going to win the war. I didn't know where we were going or why, but we were supposed to come on in there. And I'm in the lead half-track on the radio, sitting up high. And little, old, narrow streets, and the door popped open right opposite us there, and an Eagle colonel stuck his head out the door and said, "Where in the hell you think you're going?" Of course, we didn't know. (laughter) "Get those vehicles back from here and hide them out under yonder. Put them anywhere you can get them, but get away from here!" That was the best news I ever heard. We were heading right into hell. (laughter)

**White:** You were going to be the front line.

**Pace:** Oh, we were. We were right on it. It was just right out there.

**White:** We haven't mentioned what division you were with.

**Pace:** I was in the Seven Fiftieth Tank Battalion, which is always attached to an infantry division to give them mobility, and we was—oh, my goodness. I got it right over there on that map. (laughter) Timber Wolf Division, and any time they struck hard times out there with the foot soldiers, "Come in here and mobilize."

**White:** Called on you guys.

**Pace:** "Get in here!" That was the kind of job we had all the way till it ended. The infantry didn't know how to use us, but they would try to use us.

**White:** You didn't get wounded during all of that?

**Pace:** I don't know why. I don't know why. I still don't know why I'm here. I lost them on each side of me. Talking to a tech sergeant one morning under a bank cave there during the breakthrough, the Belgian Bulge, and he was a tech sergeant in the infantry where I was a staff sergeant in the Army. And we were visiting and watching the little officers over here, first and second lieutenant. I actually heard one of them say, "I don't believe we going to get hurt. I don't believe anybody's going to take advantage of us." Or something to that effect. They expected some of the men to do it. Well, this tech sergeant, it was cold. Right across the street there, they had a stove, a potbellied stove fired up, and all of them that could get in there around it were. And he says, "I think I'll go over there and warm." And I didn't go. I stayed put. Five minutes later he was dead. Germans came over dropping, looked just like our coal pellets, but they were little bombs. They pretty well wiped that house out, just spilling them as they go.

**White:** Dropped them out of planes?

**Pace:** Yeah. Yeah, maybe one plane; at most, two. And do a lot of damage.

**White:** How long did you serve overseas?

**Pace:** Right at two years. Somewhere between eighteen months and two years.

**White:** Were you overseas when your time came to get out of the military?

**Pace:** Oh, yeah.

**White:** Was the war over, or did you just get sent—

**Pace:** Well, I was there when it was over, yeah. Yeah. You may recall by history that the Allies captured the Rhine Valley and in so doing, they caught most of the German Army in that pocket. And then it was up to those in that pocket to break out wherever they could. And that was about the most dangerous part of it all. You never knew when they was going to break out where you were. And I'm standing beside the road here, one afternoon, little town about like Weathersby. And up the road comes that jeep, two stars, and it turned out to be General Rose(?), the head of the Third Army Division, and it didn't go, it wasn't gone five minutes till here come the driver back down through there, flying, said, "General Rose just got killed up there." I said, "If they killing a two-star general, I hadn't got a chance." (laughter)

**White:** Don't want to get right up there, do you?

**Pace:** No, sir, but there I was, close to it. (brief interruption) In the spring, March and April of [19]45, you could tell the war was narrowing down, but it was a very dangerous stage where all the German Army was captured in the Rhine Valley, and they were breaking out through that perimeter around them. And one day our battalion was moving forward, and I saw a GI lying beside the road. There wasn't anything above his hips, just from his hips down. And I thought to myself how horrible it was, and I wished I could find the other half of a body or something to that effect. I just remembered. And it didn't seem like any time till there lies a German that there wasn't anything from his hips down, just the upper torso. Together they would have made a man, but that's how it was there, the dying-down, dangerous, very dangerous. And well, it was late April or early May, for instance, we might travel five miles today, and tomorrow we wouldn't travel a hundred yards. It was that kind of deal, and they sent my little mortar platoon, which was twenty-seven men, three half-tracks with mortars, one ammunition truck, and one light tank. And one day they told us to go to such-and-such a town, which wasn't but two or three miles away, and somehow or another—I don't know how it happened, but we ended up in the town beyond that. And it wasn't safe at all. Of course when we stopped, our soldiers hit out right away, looking and looting and going on, and here comes Franklin, my rifle security, back, looked like to me he had Hitler ahead of him. He was punching him with a rifle. "Lordy, what is this?" Make a long story short, there was a whole

company of Germans in that little town that we had gone into that we shouldn't have gone into. We went one town beyond where we were supposed to go. I had two in my platoon that could speak German as good as the Germans. Ike Horst(?) and he was a very religious man. I had a lot of respect for him. And I had one named Weber, and he was anything but religious, but they could both talk that German, and our soldiers kept turning up with these prisoners they were finding in the barns and the houses. And Lord, we didn't know how many there were. And they were lining them up on the wall. Told Ike Horst to interview them there and find out who the commander was and so forth and how many there was, and he didn't have much luck. Their commander was the first fellow they brought in, (laughter) by accident. And Ike Horst wasn't getting along too well. They wouldn't talk to him. I said, "Weber, you try." Time he slapped two or three of them—

**White:** This was the nonreligious man.

**Pace:** Yeah. (laughter) The unreligious man. He popped two or three of them real hard, and they couldn't talk fast enough. He even got the roster, and we called the roll. Loaded them on that truck and carried them back. We all could have been killed just as easy as we lived.

**White:** The fortunes of war.

**Pace:** Fortunes of war. The good Lord protected us because there we were, able to get them without a shot being fired, and actually we had the mayor of the town and all the high-ups, helping us gather them, wherever they were. They were hid there till we got every one of them. Called the roll, and there they were. Load them up.

**White:** Well, did you guys realize that the war was almost over then?

**Pace:** We knew the way it was, and we kept hearing it. And *Stars and Stripes*, the only paper we got, was telling us, but we were scared to death every day because further back in yonder, they played it more cautious. Now, it was nearing the end, and you might travel miles today, and tomorrow you wouldn't travel a hundred yards. We knew it was close, but it wasn't close enough to suit us, and it happened on May the sixth. Boy, that was a happy day if you was still alive. And—

**White:** You knew you stood a chance of going home anyway.

**Pace:** Well, you knew that was coming at some point, and if you had seventy-nine points, you could go home then. And I lacked one having that much, and they arrived at that points by injuries, maybe the Purple Heart, or the number of battles you were in. I was in three, and if I'd have been in four, I'd have had it. I just didn't get to go. But I'm back there guarding the salt mine. They put all of us to guarding something. And my mortar platoon was guarding a salt mine. Didn't understand it (laughter) till I got down in there, and all the rich art of Europe was buried down there.

**White:** I have read about that.

**Pace:** It was there, man, all over the place that they had confiscated everywhere. And here it was in this salt mine, and that was our job, to guard it. And we did that until the Potsdam Conference in Berlin, and they transferred us there. And we all called it Spit-and-Polish; you just supposed to look good. (laughter) Keep your shoes shined and wear a tie and do everything that made you look good for Stalin and Truman and Churchill. They meeting, deciding the future of the world, I guess. And all we supposed to do is look good. And I stayed there in Berlin till December, after the war, because I wasn't going to get to go until January. And in January, they shipped those of us going home to Brema(?), Holland, up on the Atlantic Coast. There we got on a boat to come home. Got out January the twenty-first. And all that time, almost four years, I had ten thousand dollars worth of GI insurance, but when they were separating us—and I got out at Camp Gordon, Georgia, because my parents lived nearby there, Daddy following that construction work. And they were trying to sell me on keeping that insurance so dog-gone hard, trying to sell everybody, and most of them had sense enough to keep it. And I don't know what happened to me. (laughter) I said, "I don't want anything y'all got. I just want to get out of here." (laughter)

**White:** You wanted to separate, huh?

**Pace:** I hated every day of it. I was a citizen soldier, and I didn't take that insurance that I had paid on every month for four years, and it wasn't but one year or maybe two until it was paying the premium for you. You didn't have to pay anything, and here I'd done thrown it out.

**White:** You had enough value built up in it that it would have made it—

**Pace:** That's right. Yeah. It had enough that it would pay the premium every year. You had it for gratis, and I got out in Georgia, and seem like my parents were at LaGrange, Georgia. He was building a road for Carr(?) Brothers Construction Company at that time. And I stayed two or three days with them, and then I got on the bus, and here I come to Mississippi. I had a lockbox at the Citizen's Bank in Philadelphia, and they had that invasion money when we were over there in Europe. They called it invasion money. The United States had the plates, and they had run off, I guess, all they needed, and then they let the Russians have it with the understanding that your serial number starts with a zero. All the difference, the Russians started with a zero. And I think Russia must have made a boxcar load of it. Those Russian soldiers, some of them hadn't been paid in four years. When we met up with them in Berlin, they'd have a suitcase full of money. (laughter) Yeah. And man, a watch that had a second hand, all you had to do was name the price, they wanted it, and they had the money to buy it. And I saw a GI in my platoon sell one cigarette to a Russian for fifty dollars. They didn't have it, but they had the money, and the GI had sense enough to try to get it. (laughter) And they got their part of it.

**White:** In gambling or selling, huh?



**Pace:** Gambling or selling, yes, sir. Some of them would steal out of the kitchen; I heard. I never saw it, but coffee, sugar, and such as that, and sell it.

**White:** Well, where did you come back? You said you had a lockbox in Philadelphia. How did you get over to Simpson County?

**Pace:** All right. I came by there to see if my lockbox had—I left my mama with one key, and I had the other one because I didn't think I was coming back. And my checking account, there was the stuff I sent home from Berlin and otherwise. I was on the guard. So I was sergeant of the guard one night when a lieutenant was the officer of the guard. And he and I ride together in this jeep, and he's Lieutenant Perrette(?) from New Orleans, and I'm from Mississippi. That made us pretty good colleagues, and he was the finance officer for my battalion. Sometime during the night I just told him that I got several thousand dollars; doesn't seem to be worth a dime. You couldn't send home but what you made plus 10 percent. And he said, "Well, I'm going to be down there, taking that money in the morning for these GIs. If you bring it down there, I'll see what I can do." Or something that effect. Next morning, there was a line from here to the road, one at a time, coming up to Lieutenant Perrette to send home their little money. I walked right by that line with a paper sack, went right up to the desk, and I said, "Lieutenant, here's that sack you wanted." I dropped it, and I didn't know whether he ever got it home. But it was in my bank account. That's what I went to see.

**White:** Make sure it was there, huh?

**Pace:** Yeah, make sure it was there. And I left Philadelphia on the bus. I can't remember. I must have called Mary Louise Barksdale to meet me. Now, I hadn't seen her since December before the war. I had met her down at Southern. She looked like a pretty good potential for a girlfriend, and she invited me to her house to eat supper on Christmas Eve, I believe it was. She was teaching school at Waynesboro; been out of college one year. I'm at her house. We're sitting on the couch.

**White:** Where did they live?

**Pace:** Morton.

**White:** Morton.

**Pace:** Somebody knocks at the door; I believe it was a knock, doorbell, or something. She gets up and goes to see about it, and lo and behold, she opens the door and goes out on the porch. I'm sitting in here on the couch, and I'm trying to hear what goes on. Boy, I wanted to hear it. Well, at one point I heard him say, "You get rid of him, and we'll be back." So when she walked back in there, I was putting my hat on. She couldn't understand that. "I'm helping you get rid of me right now." And I walked out. That's the last I saw of her. (laughter) Now, why I got back in with her, I don't

know. She sent me a box of cigars over there, and I was very glad to get. I'd quit smoking cigarettes, and she picked me up in Forest off that bus when I left Philadelphia; went to her house. But I was headed for Hattiesburg where I left from. So I know she had to take me down there. Maybe I rode the bus. I don't remember that, but anyway I ended up at Hattiesburg. And my dream was to go in the wholesale oil business. And while I was in Berlin I got a letter from the head knocker of Sinclair in Mississippi. I always said it had five dollars worth of stamps on it, but the essence of that letter was, "You see me before you make any decision on the future." Oh, that sounded all right because that was the wholesale oil business talking there. And C.J. Peck(?) was the oil man for them in Hattiesburg, who I had had the service station under. And I went back there to work with him on that GI Bill: you pay me half, and the government pays me half. And I got familiar with the wholesale oil business from the first of February till I came to Magee, August the tenth and started my own. They had a meeting in Jackson. That was supposed to be of all the jobbers in the state, the wholesale oil business with Sinclair Refining Company. And Peck was very insistent that I go with him, but he never would say why. But of course it turned out that I was announced as the new jobber in Magee, Mississippi, at that meeting. And oh, I felt my oats.

**White:** Sort of glad you went, then, huh?

**Pace:** Yeah. Yeah. I found out really why I had been invited. (laughter) But I was just young enough and eager enough and ambitious enough that they didn't have a living thing, no station, no wholesale warehouse, nothing between Jackson and Hattiesburg. Put me here in the middle, and I had to do it all. I look back now, and it scares the devil out of me (laughter) that I come in here and had to build my wholesale plant, build my station, start from scratch; had to go to Birmingham and get my gasoline tank, truck, and all that. And you took whatever you could. It was all short.

**White:** Pretty hard to supplies after the war, huh?

**Pace:** Hard to find, and you didn't ask the price if you found it. And I got back here, and I know what it means to open at six in the morning, close at six in the evening, and not have a customer during that period of time, getting started. And I took on a trial deal of—(End of digital file named tape one, side one. Beginning of digital file named tape one, side two)—deal of running that gas truck each day. I'm driving it, no employees, just my wife in the office. And I'd go down [Highway] 28, maybe toward Mize today. Tomorrow I'd go [Highway] 28 out through here toward Prentiss, and next day [Highway] 541, taking a different road out of Magee each day as if I was delivering product. I wasn't delivering a thing. I was just being seen. Got the gossip going that I had gotten business pretty early. Well, I hadn't gotten anything. (laughter) But I finally caught on a little bit at a time until when I came in here, there was five wholesale oil drivers in the town of Magee.

**White:** Is that right?

**Pace:** Dan McIntosh(?) at Mendenhall. And the mayor of the town was O.J. Biglane(?), and I was up there at the city hall, looking at the map on the corner I bought down there by the hotel. And he being the mayor and the Pure Oil agent, which got a commission. Most of them back then were agents. He came over there, and he said to me, and it's almost a quote if not a perfect quote, "Young man, you'll be sorry for the day you came to Magee with your little money because this oil business is all taken." Now, I was already afraid. I knew I'd bit off a whole lot to chew, but he literally scared me to death. But it was the best thing could have happened to me because I went to work night and day to be sure that I didn't cry about having come here.

**White:** Made you determined then.

**Pace:** It made me determined. It was the one motivating factor that made me work, but then I was going to Southern Extension College at night, six to ten or even to midnight, but in that range. Go there every night and up the next morning, opening my business at six o'clock and working till six o'clock. That was how I started.

**White:** Well, where did you and your wife get married? Here in Magee or in Morton?

**Pace:** Philadelphia.

**White:** Philadelphia.

**Pace:** It was a friend of mine, his brother's family had the florist, and with arrangements with him to set it all up, we got married there at the florist with the preacher coming out there. And hell, I'd never been married before. (laughter) Wasn't too excited about it, and I thought we was going to Meridian, and I stopped at the service station uptown where my friend had a station, and I told him, "Fellow, I just got married." "Where you going?" It was getting close to night. "Going to Meridian." "You got a reservation?" "No, I ain't got nothing." He goes in there and calls them. I don't know what he tells them, but when I got to that hotel in Meridian, you'd have thought I was somebody. (laughter) Man, they treated me with the red carpet, (laughter) and here I was going down there just so-so. That's how it all happened, and from that I been hitting it ever since.

**White:** Said you had two children?

**Pace:** Two children.

**White:** Do they still live around here now?

**Pace:** One of them lives right there.

**White:** Right behind you, huh?

**Pace:** Right behind me. The other one lives right down here, a dead end.

**White:** They're close to you then.

**Pace:** Yeah. And that was no accident. That was planned.

**White:** Your son still runs the station right down here, doesn't he?

**Pace:** My son and my daughter are at the wholesale plant, over on the track. He's the manager, and she's the administrator. So many taxes and this, that, and the other, and they've got these convenience stores. You may have seen that one in Mendenhall on [Highway] 13.

**White:** Right.

**Pace:** Yeah. They got five of those, I think. But every one of them's put on land that Old Papa prepared for them (laughter) way back then. About all the money I made, I'd plow back into the business. Got to creeping up on sixty-five, and I was interested in Medicare. So I got my accountant, who is Ray Gibson(?), CPA out of Philadelphia; he set up a subchapter S and made my son and my daughter and my wife the owners of it. Here I am out here, a broken man in the county. But that's what we were operating under when I went to see the Social Security man. Well, I'm sixty-four. I go at sixty-four to talk to him about starting at sixty-five. He knew me, knew of me anyway. "Mr. Pace, you can't have your cake and eat it, too." I said, "Fellow, I been paying on this Social Security since 1937—I believe is when it started. And I'm going to get some of it. You just as well to get ready for that because I got ready for it." And I told him how I'd arranged my business. Well, he couldn't argue with that too much. Said his daddy retired at sixty-five and started drawing his Social Security and died two years later. I said, "Well, let's hope that doesn't happen to me, but I want to be drawing on it." And sure enough, I got it started, but then I got a eighteen-hundred-dollar check not long after my interview with him, and I wouldn't cash it. I didn't know what it was for, from the government. And I saved it for my accountant. I said, "What's this check I got here? I'm not sixty-five yet." He said, "You spend that thing." And it was the beginning of my—

**White:** You was afraid it was going to commit you to something, huh? (laughter)

**Pace:** I guess so.

**White:** I believe you should have got a State retirement check in there, too, shouldn't you? I seem to remember your serving—

**Pace:** I get \$163.33 (laughter) state retirement.

**White:** Well, I know you were State Senator for a number of terms. How did you get into politics? We hadn't talked about that.

**Pace:** Well, I joined the American Legion shortly after the war when I got here to Magee. I joined the local post. And they had a meeting. I don't know. I didn't go. I don't know whether I didn't know about it, or what it was, but the next morning they call me and tell me that they elected me commander of the local post when I wasn't there. So they didn't leave me much choice but to go to work. And the biggest membership Magee ever had, we got it. Everybody, if you was a veteran, buddy, you had to join. And from that the State took notice. And next year or so I'm district commander, and I remember one rainy Sunday afternoon, Willard Hayes(?) and Doug M. Dansby(?) from Philadelphia, where I was raised, former friends and friends now, came down here in the rain that Sunday to get me to run for vice commander, which they had three in the state, north, central, and southern. So I agreed to run for vice commander of the central district, which pleased them. And then a week or right away, I find out I'm not even in the central; I'm in the southern. (laughter) Lordy! And I went to work on that and got to be vice commander in the southern district. And there was a fellow named Odom(?), wore a medallion around his neck. He was one of the formers of the American Legion in Paris, and he was a sure enough thoroughbred American Legion. He worked at it. And he came to me at, oh, I believe it was the national convention in Miami, and says, "I'm going to run for state commander in Mississippi, and I want your help." Now, that's in the winter, say, before this breaks in the summer. I said, "Well, it's going to be kind of difficult for me to help you and me, too. I'm running!" (laughter) He said, "You are?" So sure enough, I was, and he and I batted heads the next summer at the state convention, and I beat him out. And after I was state commander of the legion, I really don't know how this senate thing started. Politics was in the air. They had these speaking at every little joint, back then, and somebody played guitar or something. I kindly got a fever for that. So I ran for the senate. My wife says, "What you want with that? What does it pay?" I says, "Hell, I don't know what it pays." (laughter) And I didn't. And when I went up there to be inaugurated, I didn't know where the senate was. I had to ramble around there and find out where the chamber was.

**White:** What year were you first elected?

**Pace:** I was elected in [19]59. This was January of [19]60 when they inaugurated. Well, I really, all I wanted with it was to have something to do with the laws I had to live under. That was my motivation more than anything, and then I get up there and find about 152 other dudes, (laughter) whatever ambition they had put me on the back seat, sort of. But it was interesting.

**White:** You served, I believe, four terms, didn't you?

**Pace:** No. I was defeated in [19]72. I served from [19]60 to [19]64, skipped, [19]69 to [19]72, I believe. Ike Sanford(?) beat me from Covington County. I was running in Covington, Simpson, Copiah, and Lincoln. They redistricting every year.

**White:** Pretty big territory.

**Pace:** Every year you had a new territory. If I got familiar with you in this county, well, hell, I might have two—in that case I had two counties over there, big counties, Copiah and Lincoln, and they had two candidates over there, and of course Ike Sanford was Mr. Politics in Covington County, kin to about two-thirds of them.

**White:** Well, I remember one thing in particular. There was a lot of things going on in the early [19]60s, in racial strife and everything else, but one of the biggest changes in Mississippi was made during your first term. That was the legalization of alcohol in Mississippi. I'm not asking you how you voted or anything. I wondered if you had—

**Pace:** It's an open book.

**White:** —if you had a comment on what it's done for the State.

**Pace:** Well, we had a black-market tax. Illegal for you to sell whisky, but if you do, you owe the State 10 percent. William Winter got enough money to run for governor out of it. He was the collector. Well, I thought it was just impossible to have a law like that, black market. And when that thing came up in the legislature, I signed the petition with all the boys on the Mississippi River and all the delegates on the Gulf Coast, and here I am in the Bible Belt, but I'm for it. Prohibition. You bet. Man, when that broke out down here, they got after me. (laughter) They invited me to the Baptist Church.

**White:** You had the same type experience as my father did in the House at that time, too. He was called upon by a delegation. We're about to run out of tape here. I'm going to stop it, and we'll start with a fresh tape here. (brief interruption)—the legalization of alcohol in the state.

**Pace:** That's where we were. And it was—

**White:** A couple of local ministerial groups didn't see eye-to-eye with you, did they?

**Pace:** Oh, it wasn't just a couple, man. It was all over. They just didn't see eye-to-eye with it. My good friend J.O. Parker(?) had something to do with the board of deacons down there, and he called around here and said they wanted me to meet with them. When could I meet. And I thought to myself, "We going to vote on that thing Thursday." I said, "Well, I could probably meet Friday, Friday night." "Well, that's fine."

**White:** You wanted to make sure you got the vote in first. (laughter)

**Pace:** I wanted to meet with them after I had voted, yeah. (laughter) And I did. And well, I understood I was going to meet with the deacons, but when I got there, that

church was full, running over, man. They were there from Mendenhall and everywhere else. I was sitting in there. They gave me a seat, but you'd think I stunk. (laughter) They wasn't having much to do with me. I was really in a fix. I sat there and listened to one after another get up to the podium and say they thought they knew Jack Pace, but they were disappointed and all that kind of stuff. I guess I finally got mad, sitting there. (laughter) They were tearing me up. Well, the good Preacher Hicks, nice fellow, when it was all over, nobody else volunteered to speak, why, he called on me.

**White:** Finally asked you to get a word in.

**Pace:** Finally asked me. Well, I had set there till I was hot; I was mad, and I didn't know what I was going to say, but I unloaded on them. And I particularly looked at certain friends that I knew was guilty as sin, as I talked. (laughter) And when it was all over, some of them followed me home. "You know I had to do that so-and-so." (laughter) But the next time I ran, man, all of them was for me. But right then, I didn't have a friend. But the next time, they were right in there helping.

**White:** Well, the voting booth, thank goodness, is a private place, and you can (laughter) vocalize somewhere else.

**Pace:** Well, they'd had enough time to think through it, I guess, and see that it was an improvement. It certainly was an honest proposition (inaudible).

**White:** Better than being dishonest about it, too.

**Pace:** Oh, absolutely.

**White:** That's what my dad felt.

**Pace:** Yeah.

**White:** What changes have you seen in Magee over the years, good or bad?

**Pace:** Well, I'm going to have to say it's good because it was a one-horse town when I got here August the tenth, 1946, and it's just as progressive as anybody could want. And you can name any facet of it, and it's an improvement to some extent. You don't have all these dead stores downtown. And they've expanded out on the new highway. Well, it's just life, moving on, all improvement as far as I'm concerned.

**White:** Magee's a good place to live, huh?

**Pace:** A good place to live and raise a family, safe, secure, progressive. In fact too many of them think that if the courthouse was here, Mendenhall would fall over. (laughter)

**White:** Well, they might be right.

**Pace:** Well, it's a happy place. Why I'm here, Lord have mercy; that's the way the good Lord did it. I claim he was about two steps ahead of me in everything I touched.

**White:** Well, you could be right on that.

**Pace:** I just don't understand the way I've moved all my life, and all of it just fall in my hands, fall in my—I think back to when my parents endured the panic, [19]29 to [19]34. We didn't have a dollar for anything. Had a car in the barn, all jacked up on stove wood blocks; couldn't buy gas. Why were they having to endure that sort of thing, and I come along here in so-called lush times, no problems? Everything working.

**White:** It may be in how you looking at it, too. I suspect there were a few problems along the way there. (laughter)

**Pace:** Lord, there was problems.

**White:** I think you just mentioned a couple of them, too, when you were talking about how hard that first \$200 was to pay back.

**Pace:** Yeah.

**White:** And you had a lot of hope and a lot of good experiences in your life, and it has turned out well.

**Pace:** Well, you had obstruction, but you worked at it. But overall, the era is much more favorable now than it was in 1930 to make progress.

**White:** I think so. One other thing, if I remember rightly, that you were instrumental in that, came in, in the early [19]60s, too, was part of the Universal Manufacturing Plant up here, too, wasn't it?

**Pace:** That was the biggest fight I ever had. Magee and Mendenhall at each other's throats.

**White:** Well, they still are, aren't they? (laughter)

**Pace:** Well, not like it used to be. Not like it used to be. I was president of the local chamber and also in the Senate, and one of our gentlemen whom I had a lot of respect for, and he was a good person, but he was narrow on this Mendenhall, Magee stuff. It took a transplant like me to really analyze it. Otherwise they were just narrow, both towns. And he walked up to me one evening and shook his finger in my face and said, "Better men than you have tried to bring Magee and Mendenhall together." (laughter) I'll never forget it. I said, "I'm sure better men than me have tried. There's nothing



wrong with me trying, is there?" (laughter) But I called Governor Ross Barnett. We were about to lose this thing. We got a resolution through the A and I [Agriculture and Industry] Board, getting the money to build the plant, but nobody had ever gotten a second resolution out of the A and I Board for buying the land. And I called the governor, and he met me one morning at six o'clock. And he got that A and I Board together for that day for one o'clock and told me to have all the people I could get from Simpson County up there. And I called George Grubbs(?) and told him what was going on, and man, they came in school buses and all that stuff, and that meeting hall was full up there.

**White:** They let them know Simpson County was ready.

**Pace:** They let them know Simpson County was ready for it. We're here to support. And Sonny Montgomery ran against him, and he got killed in a storm. He was the head of the A and I Board, Joe Bullock(?). Joe Bullock, he was the director of the A and I Board, and he had these big-shot lawyers as the counsel members, and they said, in that meeting—it was an open meeting, them and us. He said, "If you draw the right kind of resolution, you can get that second resolution through." And I said, "Joe, can you draw it up like it's supposed to be?" "Oh, yeah." I said, "Why don't you go do it, man?" He said, "Well, it won't do you any good. You got to have all five supervisors sign it." I said, "They're setting right there. They're waiting for you to bring it." (laughter) And that's the one that bought the land that put the factory there.

**White:** Basically halfway between Mendenhall and Magee.

**Pace:** Halfway between Mendenhall and Magee. It couldn't have gone anywhere else, no way. And then sometime after that, not too long, certain counties—there were twenty-seven at that time—had taken two mills away from the State who got four mills of that county's taxes. But they were getting it for recreation, like North Mississippi got all those lakes up there. Two mills away from the four mills that the State got for recreation. Twenty-seven counties had done it out of eighty-two. And I got a wild hair, and I remember talking to Alvin(?) about it.

**White:** That's my dad you're talking about? Alvin?

**Pace:** Yeah, Alvin White. He and I had to be together on everything, everything. And Governor Coleman had come back, and he was in the House, and of course he had a lot of influence. And we were on the other side of politics from Coleman. (laughter) We were in Johnson's(?) boat, and here's Coleman; if he finds out we want it, he's going to be against it. Judge Coleman here in Magee fought me tooth and toenail, and never knew why. He was a brother-in-law to E.T. McAlpin(?) who was a big Democrat. But I called Judge Coleman, and I said, "You want to do something for Simpson County?" "Oh, yeah." He had been in the House, but he got defeated.

**White:** G.C. Coleman, is that right? Wasn't that his name?

**Pace:** G.C. Coleman, right.

**White:** They called him Judge, G.C.

**Pace:** He was an accountant, as well, (inaudible) taxes (inaudible). Oh, yeah, he wanted to do something. I said, “Well, you’re kin to Governor Coleman.” Of course his kin was about that much, (laughter) but he was a Coleman. But I made him feel good. I told him what we was trying to do. “And if we can get Governor Coleman for it, it’s a going through. And you can get it.” He went to work on it, and he got it. Man, when that thing came up in the House, Judge Coleman was for it 100 percent, and if he’d have known Jack Pace was pushing it, (laughter) he’d have voted against it. (laughter)

**White:** You had both sides working for it.

**Pace:** Yeah. Oh, that was a fight, but we got the two mills. I remember when I went to my seat in the Senate, John Clark Love(?) from Attala County said, “You didn’t have any cutoff on that.” I said, “I didn’t mean to.” (laughter) Two mills. And when Hugh Jack Stubbs(?) was administrator of the county—now, all this was secret, quiet.

**White:** At the time.

**Pace:** Hugh Jack says, “They still paying that two mills; long ago paid it out.” (laughter) I said, “Man, don’t say that loud enough for anybody to get a hold of it.” (laughter)

**White:** Don’t bring it to anybody’s attention. (laughter)

**Pace:** Don’t bring it to anybody’s attention. They’ll stop it. But that was a godsend for Simpson County.

**White:** Well, they’ve since changed hands and closed up, but it’s been an economic mainstay to Simpson County for years and years and years, and one of the few things that Mendenhall and Magee still weren’t fighting over, I believe it’s Howard Industries today.

**Pace:** Howard out of (inaudible).

**White:** Yeah. They’ve had some recent layoffs.

**Pace:** Yeah, I read that in the paper.

**White:** Everybody’s still backing them for right now and hoping they do well there and hold Simpson County together.

**Pace:** Yeah. Well, all in all Simpson County is 100 percent, as far as I'm concerned, good.

**White:** You not thinking about moving back to Philadelphia?

**Pace:** No, sir.

**White:** Conehatta?

**Pace:** All my folks died up there, so I don't even have reason to go back to a funeral. (laughter)

**White:** Well, I certainly enjoyed talking to you today. I appreciate you taking this time.

**Pace:** I thank you.

**White:** Thank you. (brief interruption) I know I had already thanked you for finishing the interview, and then you and I started talking about family here. You were talking about your mother. We thought we might get a little of this information for genealogy purposes.

**Pace:** My mother was the youngest of thirteen children of Reverend Long. And my mother was my idol, and she's the one that made sure we went to church, and we went to school, and we did right.

**White:** Was she a Methodist?

**Pace:** Methodist. Her daddy was a Methodist circuit rider, horseback and horse and buggy. And I met a fellow when I was in the Senate, [a man] named Molpus, who lived in rural Neshoba County, told me my granddaddy spent the weekend with them every time he went toward the east of Neshoba County, toward Kemper.

**White:** That wouldn't be Dick Molpus, would it? Or would that be one of his uncles?

**Pace:** It wasn't Dick Molpus; it was his country cousin.

**White:** His country cousin.

**Pace:** Dick Molpus lived up on the town hill in Philadelphia. My daddy cut logs and had sawmills for him. But I can't forget my mother. My mother had six children. I'm the oldest of the six, and every one of them has done pretty good.

**White:** What were the brothers' and sisters' names?

**Pace:** My brother, only brother, named Joe. My sisters, according to their age, the oldest Elizabeth, Myra Nell(?), Margie(?), Era Faye(?). That's the six children, and we all—well, we're not all living now. There's just two girls and my brother living and myself.

**White:** Well, you guys were probably born in different towns, weren't you?

**Pace:** Oh, yeah. Yeah.

**White:** The way your folks moved around.

**Pace:** They started moving after I got to be a big-sized boy, eight or ten years old, when my daddy got in the construction work. And they would move, and I guess all four of the younger ones was born different places and went to school, finished high school, all of them, and college, most of them, but moving all the time.

**White:** Well, what was it like, growing up in a house with six children?

**Pace:** Five others and myself. It was one big room. I had a bed as the boy, and the girls, two or three of them, had their bed in that same room. And my daddy and mother lived across the hall where the fireplace was. If it was wintertime, I made the fire in the fireplace. Then I went to the kitchen where I made the fire in the stove with stove wood. And we didn't even have electric lights to start with. My Granddaddy Long died, and my mother inherited her little portion, and she spent that on electricity, and that gave us lights in the house. But my daddy would call from across the hall, now. I'm way away from him. Four o'clock, he'd say, "*Jack*," one time. I'd better hit the floor; I knew to hit the floor. (laughter) And if it was wintertime I built his fire first. If it was summertime, I went straight and built fire in the stove. It fell my lot in the summertime to cut that stove wood, me and another black man. We'd cut the big, round blocks, and haul them down to our house, and I would chip those blocks into stove wood, and I'd gotten up in size enough that my parents were going visiting on Sunday down in Lake, and that was my chance to cut up that stove wood pile because if I didn't he'd keep me home out of school to do it. So as soon as they pulled out of sight, I got out there slabbing those blocks and chipping that stove wood, and I thought they'd be real proud of me when they came in that afternoon. Instead they liked to beat me to death for working on Sunday. (laughter)

**White:** Yeah, your mama was a Methodist, wasn't she?

**Pace:** Yeah. (laughter) Yes, sir. She was a Methodist, no dancing, no card playing, no nothing, just good, old, Christian living according to her.

**White:** Where'd y'all go to church when you were coming up?

**Pace:** Methodist Church in Philadelphia.

**White:** Philadelphia.

**Pace:** Philadelphia, yeah.

**White:** What was Sunday dinner like, Sunday lunch?

**Pace:** Well, she'd fix it on Saturday and warm it Sunday at dinner, and the few times that the preacher would come eat Sunday dinner with us, I remember hearing my daddy saying, "Now, Preacher, there it is if you're a mind to eat it up from us."  
(laughter)

**Pace:** It was quite a life. Quite a life.

**White:** Didn't do much cooking on Sunday, then, huh?

**Pace:** Didn't do much cooking. That was done Saturday and warm it up, fit to eat, on Sunday.

**White:** What about your breakfast during the week? What'd y'all cook in that wood stove, or what did your mama cook in that wood stove?

**Pace:** All that sausage hanging behind the stove, in the kitchen.

**White:** Smoked sausage?

**Pace:** Smoked sausage. And for breakfast there'd be eggs and sausage and biscuits, all the stuff that'd make you grow. Good food, all of it raised ourselves except flour. And meal, we made the meal, ground the corn and go to mill. But that sure did beat these mornings of cereal, all I have, (laughter) cereal, cereal, cereal.

**White:** The kitchen smelled pretty good, too, didn't it?

**Pace:** Boy, those biscuits, they was big, old biscuits, too, man. You had butter, and you had molasses. You had all kind of jellies from volunteer plums and grapes and so on. Pretty good eating, though it was a panic of time for money.

**White:** I imagine it was.

**Pace:** Yeah.

**White:** Y'all always, she always had a garden?

**Pace:** Garden every year, of course. And I still do. I had one this year, eighty-six-and-a-half years old.

**White:** Well, that's good.

**Pace:** I just love to see it grow.

**White:** I'll know where to come next year when I need a few butterbeans, maybe.  
(laughter)

**Pace:** Well, I'll tell you. I can't plant anything that you have to stick, now. I don't like (inaudible) stuff. I can't stick it, but I sure do concentrate on growing tomatoes and bell peppers and cayenne peppers. And it rained so much this year, those tomatoes really put on, loaded up, but the same rain that made them, rotted them.

**White:** Yeah. I've heard a lot of people say that this year.

**Pace:** I didn't get any tomatoes amount to anything. I'd pick three or four and throw away all of them but one, that kind of stuff.

**White:** I believe they taste a little better than those cardboard ones you get in the grocery store.

**Pace:** Oh, you just can't get that taste out of those grocery stores. My son caught me hoeing out there in the garden one hot morning. And I said, "You can use this if you want to." He said, "My garden is the grocery store." (laughter)

**White:** It sure doesn't taste the same, though, does it?

**Pace:** Oh, yeah.

**White:** Well, again, I thank you for talking with us today. Enjoyed it.

**Pace:** Well, I guess we left some of it out, but we covered most of it.

**White:** Well, if you can think of anything else you want to put in here, we'll sure put it in.

**Pace:** I don't think of it.

**White:** OK. Thank you, sir.

(end of interview)