



R.C. and Mabel Hagan

Interviewed by Anne Kimzey

1. Making baskets (01:52)

R.C. Hagan: [unintelligible [?]] lived about a half a mile down below me.

Kimzey: Um-hum.

R.C. Hagan: He made baskets in the summertime. And I watched him and I picked it up from him.

Kimzey: Was he working for your family, was that-

R.C. Hagan: No ma'am.

Kimzey: No?

R.C. Hagan: No ma'am. He was renting another- he was renting land down there.

Kimzey: Ok. And he made mainly cotton baskets?

R.C. Hagan: Mainly cotton baskets, [unintelligible [?]]. He would make handled baskets, a few.

Kimzey: Um-hum.

R.C. Hagan: [unintelligible [?]] people's request, but mostly he made cotton baskets.

Kimzey: And then you said you made them for how long before you stopped?

R.C. Hagan: I made baskets about eight or 10 years, then I quit and [I think [?]] it's 40 years before I made another one.

Kimzey: And you started making them when you retired?

R.C. Hagan: Yes ma'am, when I retired, yes.

Kimzey: And why did you decide to go back making baskets?

R.C. Hagan: I don't know, just to see if I could still do it <Kimzey laughs> I reckon. Been so long since I'd made them, I [unintelligible [?]] see if I could still do it. I had two children and they all wanted baskets and grandchildren, I made all them baskets.

Kimzey: And then, um, you said people will ask you to make baskets for them?

R.C. Hagan: Yes ma'am. People [ask me [?]] to make baskets. I make a lot of baskets, we sell them as fast as I can make them. [Unintelligible [?]].

Kimzey: Um-hum.

R.C. Hagan: A lot of people ask me to make them, I'll make them, let them know when they can come get them, and a lot of people just come by and buy them, they see them here I got them, they'll come by, pick them up.

Kimzey: Um, now how much do you sell, say, a basket that size-

R.C. Hagan: Forty dollars.

Kimzey: Forty dollars? And what diameter is that?

R.C. Hagan: That's 12 inches, 12 inch handle basket. I get forty dollars for it.

Kimzey: Ok. Do you ever sell those leaf baskets and large-

R.C. Hagan: Yes ma'am. I get forty dollars for the leaf basket too. It takes-

Kimzey: It takes-

R.C. Hagan: The [smaller [?]] the basket gets, the harder it is to weave.

Kimzey: Oh.

R.C. Hagan: Takes a long time, see, the big baskets [unintelligible [?]], but those little ones sort of takes time to do it, you know.

2. How to make baskets (01:34)

R.C. Hagan: Well, you have to go into the woods and, uh, [unintelligible [?]] white oak all together. Try to pick a tree from four to six inches and got good straight bark on it, don't need any knots or limbs on it.

Kimzey: Um-hum.

R.C. Hagan: And you cut it and bring it home and split it in quarters, in eighths, and take the heart out of it, and take the bark off of it, and then you start splitting splits out.

Kimzey: Um-hum.

R.C. Hagan: And each split- each piece of- [unintelligible [?]] you get, make your basket out of, you have to split it in half every time.

Kimzey: Um-hum.

R.C. Hagan: [Unintelligible [?]] run your splits. And [unintelligible [?]] you get your splits, take them down to the right thickness you want, you first got to get the width on them. [Size the pieces up [?]] and get the width on them, and then you split it down to what you want, and then scrape them, sand them, [unintelligible [?]] you can weave your

basket while the splits is green, you can weave your basket. If your splits get dry on you, then you got to put them in water and soak them.

Kimzey: Um-hum.

R.C. Hagan: They don't work good after you soak them.

Kimzey: How do you shave them? Do you use a knife and-

R.C. Hagan: Use a knife to scrape them, yes ma'am.

Kimzey: -Scrape them?

R.C. Hagan: Use a knife. I got a regular board out there, in the shop-

Kimzey: Um-hum.

R.C. Hagan: -That I put in my vise, and I got a little [guide [?]] on it where I slide my split through there, you didn't see that.

Kimzey: No.

R.C. Hagan: That holds [unintelligible [?]], keeps my split up on top of where I can scrape it. Now, can scrape them on your knee.

Kimzey: Um-hum.

R.C. Hagan: But if you do that you'll have a hole through your leg- through your britches and your knee <Kimzey laughs> too by night. Turn your knife right up on the edge you see, pull the split under it. Straight up, and pull that split under there.

Kimzey: And you use a regular pocketknife?

R.C. Hagan: Regular pocketknife, regular pocketknife.

3. How to make baskets (01:29)

R.C. Hagan: The ribs is generally a little heavier, I try to pick the heaviest ones for the ribs.

Kimzey: Um-hum.

R.C. Hagan: They a little thicker and heavier than your splits.

Kimzey: And then you just go in and out?

R.C. Hagan: In and out, over one and under one, over one and under one. And then when make a round, you lap one on top of another one, [unintelligible [?]]. See that one's lapped from [there to there [?]].

Kimzey: Oh, ok. And you overlap it-

R.C. Hagan: Yeah.

Kimzey: -A couple inches so that-

R.C. Hagan: Oh yeah. Three or four inches- see this one's lapped from here- lap three or four inches so they won't slip out. And don't never- don't try to make all my laps on the same side of the basket. I'll make the lap this time here, you see, the next time it's over yonder.

Kimzey: Um-hum.

R.C. Hagan: Next time it's on this side. See, over there.

Kimzey: How long do these pieces, I mean, these splits-

R.C. Hagan: Eight feet long.

Kimzey: Oh.

R.C. Hagan: It's a eight foot- on a big basket it takes a eight foot- eight foot piece of [stuff [?]] to make the splits.

Kimzey: So you weave it all the way up to where you-

R.C. Hagan: Where you want it, [unintelligible [?]], yes ma'am. Then you turn one on the inside, bend it down and turn one inside and turn one outside. Tuck them in down the side to keep from coming loose, and then you make your rim, put your handle in. Handles all got notches cut in them.

Kimzey: Um-hum.

R.C. Hagan: Where they hook under the split so they can't come out.

Kimzey: Oh.

R.C. Hagan: See?

Kimzey: Uh-huh.

R.C. Hagan: I make them with a knife and the first split around the top, this handle is [lopped [?]] under there and then you wrap the rim around [them around [?]], you see that holds to it. This handle goes down to there.

Kimzey: So it's really sturdy.

R.C. Hagan: I have made them where the handle goes all the way around but [unintelligible [?]].

4. Types of baskets (01:18)

R.C. Hagan: Well, I make the leaf basket and I make the 12 inch [bow [?]] basket and I make some eight inch [bow [?]] baskets. I make the oblong baskets and I make some small- what they call magazine baskets.

Kimzey: Um-hum.

R.C. Hagan: On the bigger baskets I put a- handholds [to [?]] them.

Kimzey: On either side.

R.C. Hagan: On the sides of them. You run your basket up and find the middle of it and you just cut that rib out and turn your splits back on each side and it gives you a handhold to pick it up by.

Kimzey: Um-hum.

R.C. Hagan: When you're putting handholds in them and you use an odd number of splits to go around [they'll weave [?]], but if you use an even number of splits and you cut your handhold, or you put your handle on your basket, it's not in the center. If you use seven or nine-

Kimzey: Um-hum.

R.C. Hagan: -See? If you [unintelligible [?]], this is a nine rib. There's 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.

Kimzey: Um-hum.

R.C. Hagan: Alright, if you cut out the middle one and put your handhold in there, you got four on each side and then your handle is in the center of the basket. If that had been an eight rib basket, I'd put it- couldn't have got the handle in the center, you see.

Wouldn't have worked out. And I do the same thing on the big baskets. I put an odd- odd rib in there just to make where you cut your handhold out and it'd still be in the center of the basket.

5. Making axe handles (00:37)

Kimzey: How did you learn how to make the tool handles?

R.C. Hagan: Well, I've been making them ever since I was a boy, used to make them all the time when we was working [on [?]] the farm, we didn't have enough money then to buy them, we made them all <laughs>.

Kimzey: Um-hum.

R.C. Hagan: I just- I just- taken it up [unintelligible [?]].

Kimzey: Did you make tools for your own, I mean handles for your own use or did you sell some of those also?

R.C. Hagan: Back when I was growing up [young [?]], we used to make them for our own use.

Kimzey: Um-hum.

R.C. Hagan: But I've sold, I don't know, I expect 30 this month.

Kimzey: [Unintelligible [?]]. How much do you get for those?

R.C. Hagan: I get seven dollars for the axe handle and five dollars for the hammer handle.

Kimzey: And you make those out of hickory?

R.C. Hagan: Hickory, that's the only thing you make them out of.

6. Hunting turkey (00:43)

R.C. Hagan: I believe it was '52 when [they [?]] stopped turkey- stopped turkey [hunting [?]]. Course, they didn't hunt- didn't hunt the turkeys and for five years after that, you know. But it was open- down next to Augusta, they [stocked [?]] turkeys down there in what they call the [Folkston Few [?]] Bridge area. They [stocked [?]] turkeys down there and deer too before they did up here. Now, we deer hunted and turkey hunted both down there before we could hunt in what- in this area. This is Piedmont area up here and it wasn't stocked up here, that was [Folkston [?]] bridge down there, and this is the Piedmont area.

Kimzey: Um-hum.

R.C. Hagan: They stocked this later.

Kimzey: So what kind of game do you hunt regularly?

Other voice: [Unintelligible [?]].

Kimzey: Um-hum. Do you hunt- you hunt turkeys and-

R.C. Hagan: Turkeys and deer mostly. I used to coon hunt a lot but I don't coon hunt much anymore.

7. Making turkey calls (00:57)

R.C. Hagan: We use cherry, maple, cedar, and [unintelligible [?]], I think mostly, but I think the cedar's really the best of any of them.

Other voice: Really?

R.C. Hagan: I think it's got the best [unintelligible [?]]- it's got the best- cherry, [wild [?]] cherry's pretty good, but I think cedar's really got more [lines, lines [?]] to it than any of them, you know, I really think it does.

Kimzey: And what's the secret to making a good turkey caller?

R.C. Hagan: I just- [unintelligible [?]], I mean, just- the sound.

Kimzey: Um-hum.

R.C. Hagan: Sound like you think it ought to sound.

Kimzey: So you can make it, um, so that it looks right but it may not-

R.C. Hagan: May not sound right, yes ma'am, may not sound right. And some of the [unintelligible [?]] are the same way. [Unintelligible [?]], they make look alike, but they don't sound alike.

Kimzey: You said you get thirty dollars for those?

R.C. Hagan: Yes.

Kimzey: This is all informal, this is people who know that you make them and ask you for them or-

R.C. Hagan: Yes.

Kimzey: I see.

R.C. Hagan: I've sold quite a few.

8. Making molasses (00:47)

Kimzey: This man made molasses also?

R.C. Hagan: Yeah, made molasses.

Kimzey: Did you carry cane to-

R.C. Hagan: Oh, I made a lot of molasses.

Kimzey: [Unintelligible [?]].

R.C. Hagan: I made molasses- I made molasses-

Kimzey: [Unintelligible [?]] you got your own mill or did you-

R.C. Hagan: No, I take it to somebody up at the mill. [I've [?]] made a lot of molasses. Cut the cane, grind the juice, cook the molasses. [Unintelligible [?]].

Kimzey: Did you, um, cook it all at once or did you have it [evaporated at different stages [?]].

R.C. Hagan: Evaporated, evaporated.

Kimzey: [Unintelligible [?]].

R.C. Hagan: [Unintelligible [?]], we always just one big [evaporated [?]] [unintelligible [?]] hold two 55 gallon drums, so that's about 110 gallons. And you cook that down, put it all [unintelligible [?]], pulls on each side of it, you could raise it up and slip it off the fire. And that'd make about 20 gallons.

9. Making hash (00:58)

Kimzey: Do you ever make hash?

R.C. Hagan: <Laughs,> Lord, yes <Kimzey laughs>. Many a time, yes. Still make it.

M. Hagan: One cold day, [unintelligible [?]], they take the deer, and don't you mix beef with it?

R.C. Hagan: [Unintelligible [?]] mixed pork.

M. Hagan: Mixed pork [unintelligible [?]].

R.C. Hagan: [Unintelligible [?]], 75 quarts since Christmas, [unintelligible [?]].

M. Hagan: We freeze it in plastic containers.

Kimzey: So besides the meat, what else do you put in it?

R.C. Hagan: Onions, butter, black pepper, red pepper.

Kimzey: [Unintelligible [?]] potatoes in it?

R.C. Hagan: No ma'am, don't like potatoes in my hash <Kimzey laughs>.

[Unintelligible [?]]. Some people grind potatoes [unintelligible [?]] put in the hash, but we never did use potatoes. It's alright, we never did use potatoes in ours.

Kimzey: Um-hum.

R.C. Hagan: We just put beef, [unintelligible [?]], pork. We try to get butter, we try to have butter in place of margarine [unintelligible [?]].

10. Quilts (00:42)

M. Hagan: But I've always loved quilts, they're [unintelligible [?]]. We inherited several quilts and my grandmother made me a "Save All" quilt when I got married.

Kimzey: [Unintelligible [?]].

M. Hagan: Save all. She took the material and would cut it, and when she cut it, it made a shape very much like that and [sewed [?]] that all back together and she did it on her fingers. So when I got married, that's what she gave me was that. It was a top, so I guess several years after we married, five or six, my sister-in-law and I, we put it up in the room with cotton in it and quilted it. And, uh, so that's-

Kimzey: Was this on a frame?

M. Hagan: Um-hum. But I have always loved quilts.

11. Canning and freezing (00:58)

M. Hagan: We used to can some, a good bit, and then the freezers came along and that was a god-send for the country people <laughs>.

Kimzey: [Unintelligible [?]].

M. Hagan: Well, the best thing that the government ever did for country people- see, now when we married, going back, uh, [unintelligible [?]] lived in this house, they had what we called a [unintelligible [?]] system. It was batteries and [unintelligible [?]] outside, but it furnished the electricity to burn. They had [bulbs [?]] that burned electricity that, uh, I thought was fascinating because, see, just about that time, '39 and about '42, the REA, which was the best thing the government ever did for one group of people [unintelligible [?]], strung out the lines and we had electricity. Then we begun to freeze, and that is the best way to keep any meat or anything. Before that we canned. If we wanted to save it, we had to can it.

12. Making lye soap (00:41)

R.C. Hagan: [Yeah [?]], we used to keep a- what we called a lye barrel, we kept a big barrel out there in the backyard [unintelligible [?]]. And all the ashes come up out of the fire, through the winter, put them in that ash barrel and kept them dry. And [unintelligible [?]] get ready to make soap in the spring of the year.

Kimzey: Um-hum.

R.C. Hagan: She'd take old meat scraps, go out there and pour [boiling [?]] water over those ashes and run it out of a little spout, get the lye off and put it in a pot and put those meat scraps in there and boil it. What they call lye soap out of it. [Unintelligible [?]] strong, [unintelligible [?]].

Kimzey: [Unintelligible [?]].

M. Hagan: But I don't remember- I don't remember anybody making soap myself.

R.C. Hagan: [Unintelligible [?]].

M. Hagan: [Unintelligible [?]].

R.C. Hagan: Huh?

M. Hagan: Well, you're a little bit older than I am <laughs>.

13. Venison (00:26)

M. Hagan: I usually cook a pot roast, we cook- most of those- [unintelligible [?]] make a pot roast.

Kimzey: Um-hum.

M. Hagan: And I cook a deer roast and a beef roast together. I think the flavor- each enhances the other.

R.C. Hagan: Well, the deer steak- the deer steak is just better than beef steak. It's a softer grain, it's real good. We make a lot of deer steak.

Kimzey: [Unintelligible [?]].

R.C. Hagan: [Unintelligible [?]] cubes you know?

Kimzey: Oh.

R.C. Hagan: [Unintelligible [?]].

14. Taxidermy (01:17)

R.C. Hagan: But you got to know how to preserve that hide and all-

Kimzey: [Unintelligible [?]].

R.C. Hagan: [Unintelligible [?]], you use a certain kind of chemical or something on it, I don't know what [he [?]] uses, I never have heard [him [?]] say it. They use something on it to preserve that hide, you see. They cut those horns off, you see, all that's a paper

maiche behind that. When you take the deer up there the first time, [unintelligible [?]] stitch it up, it's sewed up the back of the neck. You got to cut it off down at the shoulders if you want to mount it. He splits up the back of the neck and skins it out. Those ears, they turn wrong side out, [unintelligible [?]] sticks a piece of paper in those ears when he puts them back. They stapled to the neck to make them sit up there.

M. Hagan: [Unintelligible [?]].

R.C. Hagan: And he saws those horns off with a regular deer skull and just puts them in a pile with your name on it. Then he drills a hole through them and bolts them down on the paper maiche and stretches the skin back up over [unintelligible [?]], there's nothing in there to rot. All the lips, [unintelligible [?]] and those eyeballs, he buys those.

Kimzey: Um-hum.

M. Hagan: [Unintelligible [?]].

R.C. Hagan: He buys those eyeballs.

Other voice: [Unintelligible [?]].

R.C. Hagan: I believe that one there cone me eighty five dollars.

Other voice: [Unintelligible [?]].

R.C. Hagan: The first [unintelligible [?]] was what, about forty dollars?

M. Hagan: Oh, less than that.

R.C. Hagan: [Unintelligible [?]], I believe that one was eighty- eighty five.

15. Cooking possum (01:11)

M. Hagan: You know it's the only, um, the only native marsupial in North America.

R.C. Hagan: [Unintelligible [?]].

Kimzey: Uh-huh.

R.C. Hagan: If you pull them up and get them good and cleaned out good and cook them, out them on a pot of water, put them on a stove and boil them, take them and get you a big pan where you can set them in there and sort of break them down and get you sweet potatoes and put around them things, [unintelligible [?]], put a little butter [unintelligible [?]], and run them through the stove and [unintelligible [?]] in the stove and cook those sweet potatoes, it's good eating, you oughta try it.

Kimzey: [Unintelligible [?]].

R.C. Hagan: That's right, [unintelligible [?]].

M. Hagan: [Unintelligible [?]].

R.C. Hagan: It really flavors those potatoes now, honestly it does.

M. Hagan: Possum and taters, don't you know that's the way the South talks, possum and taters <laughs>.

R.C. Hagan: Yeah.

M. Hagan: It's not opossum and pertaters <laughs>.

Kimzey: [Unintelligible [?]].

M. Hagan: Up around where I live they would have the possum suppers, [unintelligible [?]].

R.C. Hagan: Oh yeah.

M. Hagan: They called them possum, they wouldn't say opossum, possum suppers. We would eat some- a bite or two of the potatoes, but I just never cultivate a taste for that meat. To me, it was too fat, [unintelligible [?]]. But now, his sister loves them too.

