



John Price

Interviewed by Anne Kimzey

1. Mill history (01:49)

Price: Uh, my name is John- John price, and I was born in November the 29th, 1916, and I have lived here at the mill all my life, except four years when I was in the service, and the house that I was born in is still standing and still part of the mill property here even though I have built a, uh....

Kimzey: Is that it out your living room window?

Price: Right, I have built a new home and living in it now, and the mill has been in the family for some- over a hundred years.

Kimzey: So when was it built?

Price: The present mill was built about [a hundred years from now in [?]] 1890, it washed away in the flood of 1888.

Kimzey: Oh, so there was another mill before that?

Price: There was another mill before this one, and I'm the fourth generation that's running it; my great-granddaddy, my granddaddy, and my daddy, and now I'm running it. This is the fourth generation, and the mill run day and night back in the '20s, uh, people came here from 30-35 miles to get their wheat and corn ground and they run day and night, and my grandfather gave the toll, uh, on Sunday, for the [?] Orphanage, which is in Greenwood, South Carolina.

Kimzey: Uh-huh.

Price: And my father took the mill over in 1910.

Kimzey: I see.

Price: And he ran it until 1936 when I took it over.

2. How mill works (01:07)

Price: The mill is run strictly with water, it's run by water wheel, which is a turbine. It's not a overshot wheel-the water....

Kimzey: And did it used to be an overshot wheel?

Price: No, the turbine sits down in the water which you cannot see.

Kimzey: Uh-huh.

Price: And it has more power than an overshot wheel.

Kimzey: Uh-huh.

Price: And therefore, that's the reason we use a turbine cause we got plenty of water, and back in 1913 they did run out of water because they had a [rock and log [?]] dam, it leaked so bad that they replaced with a concrete dam in 1913 and which the dam is still being used today and I use a 42 inch granite rock mill stones that's, uh, they come in 36 inches, 42 inches, and I have two pair on the porch that's 48 inches that I got out of another mill for maybe future use.

3. More about mill (01:36)

Price: Well, you have a water wheel and some- a mixture of gears from the water wheel under the mill, and from under the mill shafts goes up under the millstone and it turns the millstones and turns the- corn goes down in the millstone and while it's turning it comes out corn meal.

Kimzey: Uh-huh, and you loaded the corn in, what did you call that [?]?

Price: Well, I had my corn in [bins [?]] and I have some elevators, and it comes of the [bin [?]] down to an elevator, and the elevator takes it up to a cleaner, and it goes through a cleaning machine and comes down into a [hopper [?]] which is, uh, above the millstones, and it comes out of the [hopper [?]] into the millstones.

Kimzey: Uh-huh.

Price: That's where the grinding process takes place.

Kimzey: And then um, you would put it in sacks after it-

Price: Right.

Kimzey: -comes out of that?

Price: I sack it up in two pound bags, 5 pound bags, and ten's.

Kimzey: So how did you do that? I've seen your sacks in the grocery store, what do you just put it under....?

Price: Well, I- I have a machine that does my tying for me.

Kimzey: Oh, I see.

Price: And I tie it up by machine, I used to do it by hand, but I got a little modern and got me a tying machine <both laugh>.

4. Entertainment (00:18)

Price: Sometimes have fish fries and when I was going to school we had a lot of chicken stews.

Kimzey: Um-hum.

Price: And then on the weekends uh, local people would have a string band and they'd get to somebody's house and play music, and we'd have square dances.

5. Falling through a bridge (00:48)

Price: When I was real small, uh, they had a bridge down here across the creek, uh, I was going somewhere and my mother was hollering for me to come back, so I was backing up on the bridge, facing her, and I was backing up- back then they had mules and all, [to mortar part of the out [?]], they had holes in it and as I was backing up- I don't remember it- but they said I fell through a hole and about six or eight feet down in a briar patch under the bridge.

Kimzey: Oh no <both laugh>.

Price: They said- like I said I was that small I don't remember it, but they said I did.

6. Railroad workers (00:37)

Price: They had a- what you called a section foreman, and the railroad had houses just about in- every little town and the colored people- they had four or five houses for the colored people to live in and then the white man used to always was the foreman and he lived in a little bit better house than the colored people, and they had about five or ten miles of track to take care of.

Kimzey: Oh, I see.

Price: And it was all done by hand, but now they got machines to do most of it.

7. Selling rabbits (00:50)

Price: And everybody would go out to the depot and see the train stop where [goal trains today, passing trains [?]].

Kimzey: And you would go see what....?

Price: And you would catch rabbits in the winter time.

Other voice: <background laughing> [?] <Kimzey laughs>.

Kimzey: Would this be live rabbits?

Price: Live rabbits.

Kimzey: So you'd catch them in a rabbit-?

Price: Wintertime in a rabbit box, and when the down train went to Augusta in the afternoon, they would have a lot of rabbits at the train-

Kimzey: [?] catchers would be there <both laugh> with their sacks?

Price: Right.

Kimzey: And so that's how you made a little money?

Price: That's how kids got a little spending money.

8. Fish fry (03:23)

Price: Well, I've had my army buddies down from all over, they have come from as far as California, uh, we meet once a year over Labor Day weekend and after they built [Hickory Knoll [?]] I had a place for them to stay and I have my army buddies on two different occasions, and the first time I threw a free fish fry for them; I had approximately 125 people.

Kimzey: Wow.

Price: And they- when they came back again they enjoyed, so they wanted to know if I'd do it again.

Kimzey: Did they bring anymore people?

Price: I told them the first one was free, but as much work I put in it, and everything they were going to have to ante up if they wanted me to do it a second time, which they was badly- which they was badly to do.

Kimzey: So how many fish does it take to feed 120 people?

Price: Well for a mix crowd, if you got grits, and cole slaw, French fries and hush puppies, and tea, I figure it takes approximately eight ounces of fish per person, that is if it's a mixed crowd, cause women don't usually eat quite as much as men, but I found with other stuff that goes with a fish fry, a pound of fish would feed about two people.

Kimzey: Uh-huh.

Price: With the other things that go along with it.

Kimzey: So you always have grits, and cole slaw, and hush puppies and-?

Price: French fries.

Kimzey: -French fries, do you make- do you cook all of that?

Price: Right.

Kimzey: How do you cook all this? Would you have big- big pots? <laughs>.

Price: Well I had special made cookers.

Kimzey: Uh-huh.

Price: And uh, big pan and you would cook for 50 people within an hour, cause you got more than one cooker.

Kimzey: Uh-huh.

Price: So you usually fry your- I usually fry my fish first, and make- fry my hush puppies, then fry my French fries.

Kimzey: So you just put lots of oil in there?

Price: Right, right, and the oil, I'll have it about three inches deep in the pan, it will cover the fish completely up when you put in the fish in it.

Kimzey: And do you, um, how do you fix the fish? Do you bread- bread them in corn meal?

Price: Corn meal, in corn meal.

Kimzey: You've got a lot of corn meal <laughs>.

Price: Right.

Other voice: [You'd be surprised [?]]

Kimzey: <laughs.>

Price: I usually put in a little buttermilk on the fish and pepper, and that- and put them in meal, and make the meal stick a whole lot better to the fish.

Kimzey: And when you um, clean the fish what does that do? Do you cut off their heads and- or do you-?

Price: Well, um, if it's a catfish you have to skin him and if it's a bream you scale it.

Kimzey: Uh-huh.

Price: And then if it's a big fish you more or less sort of- more or less filet it; cut it up into smaller pieces. You don't fry big fish whole; you usually split it down the middle and then cut it up into pieces; make smaller pieces out of it.

9. Family reunion (00:45)

Price: Right now, we're having it uh- started last year in Georgia- said they [liked it [?]] so much they want to have it again this year- uh, family reunions, and, and we've been having- my family's been having reunions now for over 25 years down here on the creek, and there's another family within the family, they've had two, they've had- they just had I think it was about a month ago, and our family reunion is coming up in July, so they always had [?] the mill, cause about all everybody in the family always come to the mill years ago and they still like to come back and have their family reunion here.

