

TRANSCRIPT—CASE AND ELLENE VAN WYK

(Compiled September 20, 1998)

Interviewees: CASE AND ELLENE VAN WYK

Interviewer: Melynn Glusman

Interview Date: August 11, 1998

Location: Pinetown, NC

Length: 2 cassettes; approximately 120 minutes

START OF TAPE 1, SIDE A

MG: This is an interview with Case and Ellene Van Wyk. We're in—is this Pantego?

EVW: Terra Ceia, actually, on the Pinetown route.

MG: OK, so the address is Pinetown, then?

EVW: Yes.

MG: Terra Ceia, or Pinetown, North Carolina. It is August the 11th, 1998, and we're at their home. The interviewer is Melynn Glusman. This is part of the Southern Oral History Program's Listening for Change interview series, and the tape number is 081198-CV.

So why don't we just start there with your family's move from Holland, why you came.

CVW: I was born in Holland. I was three in 1930 when we came to the United States and wound up in Long Island. My dad worked in for () and he had a brother in Long Island, so we wound up at that brother in Long Island's farm, and he worked there for a few years. The land there was good farm land, but our church was seventeen miles away. We finally moved where the church was, so we went back and forth to the farm, which was not ideal.

And the minister there came to Terra Ceia in the early '40s, in '42, for pulpit supply, because they were out of ministers here. And when he went back he told my dad, "Look, there's some nice land there, if you're interested in buying a farm." My dad said, "Well, I'm only interested in a farm where there's a Christian school." He said, "Well, they just started one three years ago."

So my dad came with him and checked the land over. It was a lot more land than what he was used to, because we only had thirty acres of rented land, and this was 1060 acres. So he went back and got a partner. Most of the town on Long Island was fishermen, but there was a dairyman, a carpenter, a meat cutter, and another overseer of a bull farm. So he and the overseer of the bull farm, C.G. Westerbache, and he came down with Dad and they looked it over and bought it together.

MG: So their names were C.G. Wester—

CVW: Westerbache.

MG: And then who was the other person who came down with your dad?

CVW: Just my dad.

MG: Oh, that was the partner, C.G....

CVW: ... (), the two of them.

EVW: They were going to Shirley farm.

CVW: They bought what they called a Shirley farm. It was bought by Carl Owens and his wife's name was Shirley. He lived in Rocksville, it's just a little bit above Manhattan, and for some reason they were speculators in land. And it fell from then to the bank of Columbia, and people settled here and grew a crop and left it because they knew they weren't going to make

out, and the bank would have to get the crop out to get their money. So when we came, we were just a bunch of Yankees, and we weren't going to stay long, most people didn't think, probably. We rented the farm out to the local people and let them keep on farming, with their mules and a few tractors, and saw how they did it, and then we just picked up from there.

MG: Why had your father decided to move the family from Holland to begin with?

CVW: Well, I think Holland was getting crowded, and a lot of boys in his agricultural class are now in Argentina and in Transvaal, South Africa. Well, he came to the United States.

MG: I see. So just to get more land. There wasn't enough land to—

CVW: Well, freedom, too. He liked the freedom, of course. So the first time I saw the Shirley farm, it was thirty-acre pieces of land with a ditch between each one, and the ditches were growing up twenty feet high and twenty feet wide.

MG: Oh, my gosh.

CVW: The mules couldn't plow—you know, the roots were pushing further into the fields all the time. So each cut of land looked like a farm to me, since we only had thirty acres on Long Island. And we went through thirteen of those cuts before we finally got to the cuts. The farm is two and a half miles long and a mile deep. Well—

MG: How old were you then?

CVW: Twelve or thirteen.

MG: And that was approximately 1942?

CVW: Yeah. And the road was so bad—the bank had built a road in from the 264 highway, paid a thousand dollars for the right-of-way, but we couldn't use the road. () when you try to get out, you slip in the ditch and get stuck. So we finally made a road to Terra

Ceia. There was a cartpath there, but we graded it up, put bridges in, and made a nice road to Terra Ceia. We graded it ourselves until the state took it over, and we had phone before we had electric. But REA came along, you know, and then we got electric, and came in for (). And we just got a blacktop, in the last few years, to Terra Ceia. We're real tickled about that.

MG: Oh, when was that paved?

CVW: Two years ago.

MG: Only two years ago! Well, gosh, I'm glad! This whole week I would have been driving up and down the gravel!

CVW: The road was really bad. The ruts were so deep you would hook a tractor to the car and you didn't have to steer, you just pulled it on out to the state road. Cause we had a half-mile driveway. When you got to the state road, you'd just unhook the tractor and go on. The roads are better now because we put () and stone on it.

MG: So you were born in the Netherlands, came to the U.S. when you were three, to Long Island, and then came down here when you were about thirteen?

CVW: Yeah, twelve or thirteen.

MG: And Mrs. Van Wyk, would you say a little about your early history?

EVW: My early history. Well, my dad actually helped build Terra Ceia. He had a blacksmith's shop that was located right behind the church today. And he was a builder, he built that big barn behind Hank and ()'s house.

CVW: 1915.

EVW: That's the only thing that's still living. 1915? He got married in 1916. But he rode his bicycle all the way out from 264, and that would be, what?, that would be nine and a half miles to work in Terra Ceia.

CVW: Because he went through ().

EVW: He was the village blacksmith. And he also made the muckshoes for the horses, too, and the mules to use.

MG: What were the muckshoes?

CVW: They were about the size of a dinner plate, and—

EVW: They keep the horses from sogging down.

CVW: They were fastened to the mule's foot. Because a mule has a small foot. And if the mule didn't have the shoe, then he sank up to his knee in the mud.

EVW: Almost like a tennis racket. About that size, wasn't it?

CVW: About like a dinner plate.

EVW: And then he kind of kept the equipment going for them, and sometimes he would get on the coal train and ride down to Bellhaven.

CVW: The train came into Terra Ceia in 19--

EVW: It was a little train for the land-clearing and lumber crews. Because this was all woods, at one time, and under water.

MG: Do you remember it being real wooded?

EVW: No, it was already cleared, and my dad planted the first grain of corn in Terra Ceia, with a pick. And he helped clear the land in that way, that he was mostly in the blacksmith's shop, taking care of the horses and the equipment.

MG: What was your dad's name?

EVW: C. S. Wenley.

MG: Wenley.

CVW: The train came in 1915, so that's about the time your daddy would've been working there.

MG: And about the same time he built the barn.

CVW: Yeah. But when he first started working there, he told me, he was out—where they cleared land, they just cut the trees down and logged it off and then would just step over the logs, and have a stick in their hand and just dug a hole, dropped two grains of corn, and kick it in with their heel. And they'd march across in a line and just march across that way, with a sackful of seed on their back. Somebody told the boss that he had a good carpenter and a blacksmith there, and he was making fifty cents a day, and the boss came out there and picked him up and said, "I'll give you a dollar a day." And that's when they built him a blacksmith's shop.

EVW: You see, he rode a bicycle all the way from home.

MG: Which was where?

EVW: It was on 264, between Yeatesville and Beckworth. And he would ride that bicycle. Sometimes he'd have to push it, because the road was so bad he couldn't ride.