

Interviewer's tape no.: 5.2.2.1-10/28/85 WKU FL, FL & OHA Accession no.:

Interviewer: Rita H. Kelly Address: 213 Warrior Road  
Madison, Tenn., 37115  
Interviewee: Vernon Artell (Andy) Address: 714 Due West Ave., Apt. L-164  
Anderson Madison, Tenn., 37115  
Gracie Marie Pack Little Date: October 28, 1985

Place of interview: 714 Due West Ave., Apt. L-164, Madison, Tenn., 37115

Other people present: Gracie Marie Pack Little

Equipment used: General Electric, Model # 3-5247A

Reel-to-reel tape: Brand: Size reel: Tape Mil: Speed:

Cassette: Brand: Scotch/AVX/60/ Studio Master C-30/C-60/C-90/C-120 (circle size)

Amount of tape used: (Side 1): 30 min. (Side 2): 30 min.

Brief description of interview context and tape contents: This tape is a continuation of the interview begun on tape # 5.2.1.1-10/28/85, conducted in the informants' home. Throughout this interview, the T. V. played game shows. Andy also taped the interview, and at the beginnings and ends of each side the mini tape recorder can be heard being turned on and clicking off. Topics discussed included the Farmers' Market, types of salespeople and customers, and pricing. Also discussed were supplying self with merchandise, first sales experiences, licensure, music business connections, and needlepoint.

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Tobacco Road.	004-045	I don't think any area that you're in. No where do you find it as wholesale as he writes about. I've never seen it. I wouldn't have added anything. I'd have taken 95% of it away, left about 5% where he described the country side. I'd have left that, taken the rest of it away.
	046-051	(Gracie asked me if I'd like some banana pudding. I declined.)
Electrical business.	052-152	We were living here. We'd go to auctions, bought radios, all kinds of tape players. Anything we sold we guaranteed it. If anybody got anything with something wrong

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Farmers' Market.	153-177	<p>with it, bring it back. We'd give them their money back or exchange it. Other people down there won't do that. So we could charge a little bit more than the rest of them did. People got to know us. They wasn't losing anything. We were able to sell ours for 5 dollars apiece, two for 9 dollars. Other people selling theirs for 3 dollars apiece and we were outselling them. I'd buy them at auction, low enough that I could afford to lose one every now and again and still make a profit. We sold watches that we guaranteed. They couldn't keep it six months and bring it back, 'cause they were only paying 5, 6 bucks for it to start with. That store and the market itself is not connected. Go down there on a Saturday or Sunday. You'll see more stuff than you've ever seen in your life. Anything from junk to good stuff.</p>
Farmers' Market-- flea market week- end.	178-220	<p>We'd go down on a Friday night, set up our tables. Real cold weather put up tarpoleans all the way around. We were under a shed. Sometimes we'd put out merchandise on Friday night, sometimes we'd put it out leave it boxed, crawl back in the truck,</p>

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Farmers' Market-- shoplifters.	221-246	<p>go to sleep, get out on Saturday morning, set it up. Wait for a customer, just like a little store. Watch to keep people from stealing from you. A lot of shoplifting down there.</p> <p>I ran one down one day. I caught him. No use to get him arrested, spend 4 or 5 trips to court and nothing going to happen anyway. He just reached in his pocket, pulled the watch out, handed it back to me.</p>
Farmers' Market-- security system.	247-289	<p>With so many people down there. With one man on the gate, at that time. There's no way. He didn't have any authority anyway. He's wearing a badge but he couldn't make an arrest. Now they have a policeman on Saturdays so many hours a day. He just walks around talks to the girls. That's just about the extent of his job.</p> <p>Now we have had some good policemen down there. Steve was one of the best. You might spot him anywhere. Security, you have to furnish your own. I'd say half the people down there are carrying weapons.</p>
A killing.	290-329	We've had robberies down there, killings

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Talking with customers.	330-352	down there. A friend of ours killed a man down there one night. That was one night we weren't down there. I never asked him the whole story. He just had a stall. Him and this guy got into it over something. The guy left, came back with a gun. Charlie came up with a shotgun. Shot him again after he done killed him. Never did go to trial. He's a guy I wouldn't want to mess with. I'm glad to have as a friend rather than an enemy. I get up just be friendly with them. Sometimes I tell a joke, listen to a joke. I don't do any high pressure selling. I go and ask if I can show them something, help them with something. Answer any questions. Just about like you'd do in a store.
Kinds of side-of-the-road sales-people--cut throat	353-400	You got the kind that will work together, help each other. You've got the kind that will cut your throat. We had some people that were selling a little bit of merchandise. We told them where to buy their stuff. So they were buying the same thing we had. They wound up beside us in the Market. They cut their price all the time. We were selling more than

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Kinds of side-of-the-road sales-people--working together.	401-442	they'd sell. She told me two weeks ago, "I call myself Cut-Throat Mary." What I'm selling right now she's worrying me to death trying to find out where I'm getting it. I won't talk. The guy I get them from said, "I have to sell to them if they come out here, but I don't have to sell them at the same price I sell to you." Down here on side-of-the-road, the boys that was down here yesterday, for example. This boy had the pumpkins got ready to go to lunch said, "You've got an idea of my prices." I sold pumpkins for him while he was gone. I got ready to load up earlier than he did, he ran and got all my heavy stuff, put it on the truck for me. We just worked together.
Price fixing.	443-465	We used to work with some people over on Dickerson Road. A lot of times we had the same thing. When we got ready to set up we'd get together and talk what price we were going to have today. We'd hold the price, they'd hold the price. We both sell. One of us sell just as much as the other one would. That's what I call working together.  Say he cuts my price. I'm going to

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Kinds of customers.	466-487	get even, cut that price. All at once ain't nobody making nothing. That's cut-throat. Might as well go out of business. You get local people. More is repeat customers than anything else. I've had people from Canada. They're tourists. Here's something from Tennessee nobody up there's got and can't get it. You have somebody you tell the price and they offer you half of it. Some would stop and say, "That's reasonable." All kinds.
Best customer.	488-549	People from Oregon. We got a letter back from them. We just about had our truck loaded. We had what looked like little cars, they were radios. They came up, started talking. First thing you know, we was unpacking. I believe she bought everything we had that day. The next day they came back, spent even more than they did the first day. I gave them little stickers said Souvenir of Tennessee. They was taking them back, giving them to friends, putting them on the radios. They stayed for hours to talk. We had cobalt, all sizes. [Points to some dark blue glassware sitting on the T. V.] She bought a bunch of it. They brought their camera

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Familiar or famous customers.	550-593	<p>down. Make pictures of us, take pictures of us with them, pictures of them for us. That's what makes it so interesting. You never know who you're going to meet. You meet some nice people, you meet some snobby people. Most people are nice. Sammy Smith, I knew her. Used to be my neighbor. We got people in the music business come down and buy from us. There is one guy that is famous if you go back. Old Zeke Clements. He used to be real big in country music years ago. Comes down there every weekend and walks. He walks at Farmers' Market. He has trouble with his legs, he'd come back and sit down and talk. I reckon he's the oldest one. It took me a little time to recognize him.</p>
Tourists as repeat customers.	594-617	<p>A time or two. I've had people come back to Farmers' Market bought from us last year, come back this year. I don't mean this year in particular, but it has happened. Had farmers come back, look us up. Give us produce. We filled that freezer up without buying a penny's worth. [Points to a small freezer, about 4 cubic feet capacity.]</p>

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Setting prices, profits.	618-669	<p>It depends a lot on how fast a product's going to move. If I've got a product I'm just going to sell one of every week or so, yet I've got to haul it around. I've got to get a higher profit on it. Depends on the cost of it. You take these tall plumes, those wall hangings I hang around the truck. They move so good that I can take a lower profit because I've got a high volume of business. A lot is what the traffic will bear.</p> <p>You got something looks real good, I can get X number of dollars for it regardless of what it cost me to buy. Say you got something you been paying 5 dollars for, selling it for 10. All at once you can get a few for 2 dollars. If you been selling it for 10, you hold it at 10, you still sell them. That don't happen too often. We're going to make grocery money out of it, spending money. It's not a get rich thing at all. Some weeks you do good. Some weeks you can't sell enough to pay expenses.</p>
Profit formula.	670-695	Never figure anything for your time. That's something you've got anyway. Consider how much is the cost of merchandise, rent.



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<p>Farmers' Market-- unfair practices.</p>	<p>696-760</p>	<p>On side-of-the-road don't pay no rent.            There's more hours than just getting out there selling stuff. Collecting, hauling from one place to the next. We've got a warehouse storage space that we rent that's not figured in. It's hard to figure.            Got all night? Unequal treatment. One person given some rights that another person's not given. I never miss a meeting. They'll pass a rule. They'll ignore it. In the meeting they agreed to eliminate the wall, so customers have a place to park. A guy goes to the Mayor's office, they let him put up a tent back there. He's got trucks parked all over the Market. He pays 3 dollars a day for the space, and the space is supposed to be parking space. I go to a meeting. I'm ruled out of order, doing nothing but reading their minutes to them. That's what I call not treating everybody equally.            That's just one instance. It happens all over the Market. The farmers have complained. You have people have permanent spaces there. J. Howell as an example, has built permanent buildings under their</p>

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<p>Farmers' Market-- unfair practices, Mayor's race.</p>	<p>004-055</p>	<p>sheds. Yet during the farm season they go under the farm sheds, rent 4, 5 spaces at farm rates. Even though they've got permanent spaces. They leave no space for the farmer. He should come first at that Market. The local farmer first, out-of-state farmer next, then your flea-market or whatever. But anybody's got permanent space should not be able to come over and take space from the farmer. (End side one, tape # 5.2.2.1-10/28/85. Begin side two, tape # 5.2.2.2-10/28/85.)</p> <p>When I file for Mayor, they've got to give me news coverage. I can bring all this to the public. The Flea Market, for example. Those people pay 15 dollars in advance Sunday night. If they want in the next weekend it's got to be paid before they leave there. If you come down, can't set up, you got to be down there Sunday night to pay for the next weekend. You just lost what you paid. You rent two spaces for two days there's 60 dollars down the drain.</p>
<p>Penny-hookers.</p>	<p>056-082</p>	<p>The farmer pays when they pull in. These penny-hookers that buy and sell produce, they don't raise it. They come in there</p>

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Farmers' Market-- fighting unfair practices.	083-110	and they pay the same thing the farmer pays. They don't pay in advance. We got to pay when we go out the gate, they pay when they come in. I'd put them all on equal footing. When the Flea Market moves out. When the farmer comes in, they keep moving this way. If they come to a Flea Market, you move out. As the farmers move out you can come back into your space. Once they get your money there's no refund.
Penny-hookers.	111-126	Because of the penny-hookers and the J. Howell's and the cons. That's what the farmers call them, too. Take a penny away from the farmer. Hook the penny out of the farmer's pocket.
Farmers' Market-- unfair practices.	127-150	I didn't pay every week. During the time the farmer was in my space, they put my money on credit. They was holding my money until I was able to go back. I don't go down there too often. Sub lease through the office.
Farmers' Market-- making more space.	151-206	Make more space by eliminating the guy with permanent space from coming over there under that shed to start with. They got trucks parked all over. They'll fill that space so full of tractor trailers you can't

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		<p>get in there sometimes. Hauling produce on them. From Florida, Texas, Arizona.</p> <p>I'd limit it. Other than the spaces you've got they wouldn't get no more spaces in the Market. They would park them trucks off of the Market, anywhere they could find. They got free parking. Blocking somebody else from a place to park.</p>
Supplies and equipment needed in sales spot.	207-226	Product you're selling. That's about it. Need a table to set it on, carry a table. My license.
Source of merchandise.	227-240	Spain, Mexico. I don't know the company he imports through.
Supplying self with merchandise.	241-271	Very seldom takes 2 days in a row, but you'll spend that much time. Run out there, get the stuff you need. If you run out, got to call. Got to go back, pick it up again. It's just a constant thing. I restock every Friday.
Best weekends, holidays.	272-286	The best weekend of the month is always the first weekend after the checks come. Farmers' Market will be flooded.
Supplying self with merchandise.	287-299	<p>[From this point, to counter # 568, Gracie Little participated in the conversation. Where both of them participated and answered the question, the initial "A" will signify</p>

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		<p>Andy Anderson's response, and the initial "G" will signify Gracie Little's response.]</p> <p>G: Why don't you explain to her before we got into these weeds? The other stuff we flea marketed with it took going to auctions, running to different wholesale houses, buying up, bring it home, check it out, price it. It took about 3 days to get all that stuff lined up.</p>
Supplying self with merchandise-- auction houses.	300-322	<p>A: Some days you'd sit all day long at an auction to see what was coming off those trucks which you could use. Sometimes you'd to to 2 of them in a week to get something you know you could sell. It's hard work. Maybe it ain't as hard as digging a ditch.</p>
Supplying self with merchandise-- time involved.	323-335	<p>G: It'd take about 6 days a week getting stuff ready.</p> <p>A: When you're digging a ditch you know I've got X number of dollars this week. You're doing this, you may clear a dollar. Thunder storms, wind storms. It's all on the truck.</p>
Knowing who's going to buy.	336-362	<p>A: You can't always. But it's sort of a second sense, and it's usually right. I can't explain it.</p> <p>G: After you've done it a while, you know.</p>

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First sales experience--research.	363-391	A: Trial and error. One table. G: We started out with stuff that I had was going to throw away. Andy went up on the side-of-the-road with it. A: One table. It was in this apartment when we first started out. We did sell a lot of stuff that we made. G: Yeah. Aquapage. A: We sold a lot of it. Got a warehouse. Hundreds of them at different times.
First sales experience--first sales merchandise.	392-431	A: I don't know what the first thing was I sold. I remember the first day. G: It was old dishes, what-nots, stuff like that that I had. Didn't have room for. A: I remember the first day I sold over a hundred dollars. I was so tickled I couldn't stand it. Odds and ends. G: Well you had a lot of tape measures. A: A lot of tools, steel tapes, telephones that you got down at Northern Telecom. G: They let us buy 10 phones at 20 dollars each. Someway the law said that they would have to sell their phones to A. T. and T., so they let their employees buy as many as 10. I was working security out there. We sold them at 40, 50 dollars.

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First sales experience-- pricing then.	432-459	<p>A: Since then, if we don't get a hundred dollars, we're losing money.</p> <p>A: As long as I'm getting more than I paid for it. Some of this stuff was stuff we had. It was hard to decide.</p> <p>G: When I was pricing, I made the mark-up 100%. Most places have a mark up, maybe 700%. As long as I was getting 100%, we was going to make money at it.</p> <p>A: Hauling, time. If I pay a dollar for something, sell it for 2, I'm not making a dollar profit. Maybe I'm making a quarter. The other 75 cents cover expenses.</p>
Pricing now.	460-485	<p>A: Fifty, 75 dollars apiece. If we could get them at the same price.</p> <p>G: If we could get them at the same price. If I was getting them for 20 dollars apiece, I'd sell them for 40 or 50. Never go over 50.</p> <p>A: Since the break up of A. T. and T., they would sell.</p> <p>G: And those phones that I had were selling for as much as a hundred thirty-nine, ninety-five. So that was a good deal for the people.</p> <p>A: They knew it and they bought them.</p>

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Contrast in pricing then and now.	486-491	We had people from A. T. and T., come out. Make sure they wasn't their phones. We keep it legal all the way. A: Very little. If I got something moving fast I got less profit, moving slow I got more profit.
Length of side-of-the-road selling experience.	492-496	A: Five years. G: Yeah.
Selling at other places.	497-501	G: Took it to Michigan, once. A: Carried a load to Michigan. Sold some in Ohio.
Selling at other places--Michigan.	502-536	A: Concord. Founders' Day. Her brother lives there. We set in his front yard. G: Right in the middle of town, just about. A: The house that the founders lived in, there was a church between him and the house. Everybody had to walk by his house. We didn't have to pay nothing. Rebel flags coming and going. It was a good spot. We drove a friend's mini home. We paid for our trip. Got home with more money than we left home with. Gone 3 weeks.
Selling at other places--Ohio.	537-546	A: Her sister's house, in their driveway. G: Between Cincinnati and Dayton. A: We paid for our trip, made a little money.



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Licensure.	547-567	A: I went down to the license bureau. I didn't realize I had to have two. Went down to renew, they said you got to go down to that other office first. Davidson County and Metro.
Licensure--penalty for non-licensure.	568-630	G: Get run off. A: I'll tell you one example of it. I'm the one that called the police. Big Star store on Dickerson Road gave us permission to sit under their sign. There was two other families sit there with us, the ones that we priced everything together. People from Kentucky had pulled in with a big ex-school bus. I told them to back up. They said they couldn't, the driver was gone with the keys. It's down hill, take it out of gear and it'll roll back. They rolled back and I set up. They had some of the same stuff we had. They was the filthiest people I've seen. Watermelon rinds out front, half of sandwiches on the ground. Customer would come up, start talking, they'd holler, "Hey, I've got the same thing here, and it's cheaper." I got mad. I went to the store, talked to the assistant manager. I went to the telephone.

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Maintenance of sales area.	631-644	<p>Wasn't long before a police car pulled in. He asked about my license. I said it was taped to my windshield. He asked them for their license. It was a Kentucky license, not good here. They packed up and left. We had to go down, clean up all that mess they put there. He could have given a citation, he didn't.</p> <p>It's not common courtesy to do something like that. We carried a broom with us, leave that place cleaner than it was when we got there.</p> <p>Hills gave us permission to sit there any Sunday or holiday they're closed. I leave it clean. When people know what you do they don't mind you sitting on their property.</p>
Number of side-of-the-road sales-people.	645-656	<p>Oh, good gracious. There was a bunch from Memphis this year. They worked with you. I don't know them all, but you can spot them all over town.</p>
Number of men-vs.-number of women.	657-661	<p>I'd say fifty-fifty, almost.</p>
Difference in treatment of women and men.	661-664	<p>I don't think so. Don't really know.</p>
Music business.	665-714	<p>Just made friends. Got Earl Thomas Conley</p>

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Learning needle-point.	715-749	<p>records. Got Mell Street, Billy Larkin. None of them cost me a penny. Got cases of them. They usually come through their producer. I've met them all. Met him through Lynn, my daughter. She wanted to know where Sunbird Records was. I just called. We've been friends ever since. I did a mailing out for Earl. Every country music station in the United States, Hawaii and Canada. One had to go to every station.</p> <p>I was bedridden at the time. V. A. sent a hospital bed to the house. Legs about that big around. [Making a circle with both hands with about a 10 inch diameter.] My oldest daughter bought a kit one day, and I did it. I bought the yarn and stuff. Very basic. I sold a bunch of it. We was sitting there. My granddaughter wanted frogs. She said, "Pap, let's make this frog this color, this one this color." We got purple frogs, red frogs. Something to do to kill the time. Haven't taken time in a long time.</p>
Designing needle-point.	748-760	<p>She'd bring pictures out of color books. We'd trace them off on a piece of material. My daughter bought me a book of patterns.</p>