

Charles Ray Burkett, Dallas County

Interviewee: Charles R. Burkett

Interviewer: Kate Scott

Date of Interview: 10/24/07

Run Time: 56M

Cassette

Biographical Data Form

Oral History Release

Transcript

Charles Burkett graduated from Dallas Center High School in 1947. Burkett, an avid hunter and fisherman, caught polio on July 28, 1949. He remembers it well because he was celebrating his 20th birthday with his girlfriend (later his wife) Shirley Baulsom. He was treated in quarantine for three difficult weeks at Broadlawns Hospital in Des Moines. Burkett remembers many details from his time in quarantine. For example, he talks about being served cold liver on a paper plate with no utensils. He then went to Mercy Hospital for rehabilitation. A thick blanket of sadness covered the hospital. For example, Burkett remembers one woman in the girl's ward who got sick with polio on her wedding night. Burkett talked about the hardship of daily life, "you do what you have to do to get by," he reflected. Burkett worked hard labor in a brace for Hyline Poultry in Dallas Center. He thinks the physical labor finally caught up with him. Like many other survivors, Charles noted: "I always felt like I had to prove that I could do a day's work." To this day, Shirley believes her husband contracted the virus from chickens when he was employed in the hatchery at Hyline.