

Now As I Remember...

AN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT



OF THE LAUDERDALE COUNTY DEPARTMENT
OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY &
MERIDIAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

SPONSORED BY MISSISSIPPI POWER

Edited by
MARY ELLEN WHITE

LCDA&H
98

LCDA&H, INC
Meridian, Mississippi

To order a copy of this or any other publication by LCDAH, INC.
write to or visit us at
Lauderdale County Department of Archives & History
P.O. Box 5511
Meridian, Ms 39302-5511

Compiled by Meridian Community College Students
Edited by Mary Ellen White
Book Design by Leslie M. Joyner
Director, Ed Shields

© November 1998 by LCDA&H, Inc. All Rights Reserved
Printed In the United States of America

I. Introduction

In the autumn of 1997, our new Records Manager, Rob Overton, was inspecting various files and collections and came across the interviews which make up this publication. Apparently, Lauderdale County Department of Archives and History had intended to publish the transcriptions but for some reason, this was never done. Nan Fairley, Project Coordinator, had already written an introduction, of which we reproduce her opening paragraphs:

"In the spring of 1989, students in two sections of Mrs. Patsy Chaney's American History classes at Meridian Community College were enlisted in an effort to record voices of our common past. The Oral History Project, sponsored by a grant from Mississippi Power Foundation [now the Mississippi Power Education Foundation] and coordinated by the Lauderdale County Department of Archives and History, did more than put the students to work with tape recorders. As a result of the semester-long project, diverse voices are permanently recorded, with their valuable historical insights on subjects ranging from sugarcane syrup-making to life as a sharecropper, is now a permanent part of the Archive's collection of valuable local history material.

In the process of gathering information from a variety of diverse voices, MCC students also learned about their own heritage and rural roots. The voices helped bring history close to home for the students, who learned about the Civil Rights movement, the history of local institutions and social and economic changes in the East Central area from the best teachers voices of experience.

These voices are compiled here to provide a permanent record of that experience. The collection could not have been possible without the work of Mrs. Chaney, LCDAH Director Jim Dawson, and transcribers Sallie Smith and Mary Anne Tomlinson."

On reading several of the interviews, we were fascinated by the pictures of the past in the words of those who had lived through it. Our feeling was that these interviews were both useful and entertaining and worthy of publication.

The interviews were in the form of questions by the students and answers which often strayed (frequently in interesting directions!) from the subject. We concluded that these answers were the real meat of the interviews and have kept to the actual words -- *and accents* -- of the respondents. Only repetitions have been dropped and in some case a clarifying word added, parenthetically, e.g. for "whooped" (whipped). Usually the context is sufficient to clarify the many variations of a Southern dialect.

Keeping to the actual speech of the respondent occasionally results in the use of words which are considered "politically incorrect" or culturally insulting at the present. *The inclusion of such phrases or expressions signifies only that the LCDAH wishes to maintain the integrity of the interview, not an agreement with the respondent.* Their opinions, likes and prejudices are their own and we feel that these should be left as they expressed them. While one may agree or disagree with the opinions stated, those who consented to be interviewed have shared their experiences with all of us and I, for one, am better informed than I would otherwise have been, and grateful for their willingness to share.

The final arrangement and typing of the interviews, putting them in readable first-person accounts, was done by the editor, Mary Ellen White (author of the *History of Pine Springs*, an LCDAH best seller). Mrs. White has served as a volunteer at the Archives since its beginnings.

Ed Shields, Director

II. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

MERIDIAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS WHO TAPED INTERVIEWS

Sharon Ann Merritt	Lori H. Speed	Tanya Garrard
Tonette Blackwell	Karen Johnson	Chuck Lea
Jennifer Mathis	Tony Skinner	Sylvia Wallace
Robin Coleman	John S. Slay	William M. Brown
Christopher Shelton	Kenneth McWilliams	Steve Ross
Tim Scruggs	Randall Kirk	Maurice L. Evins
Lyle Rose	Frances Bohl	Teresa Diane Gray
Geoff McCracken	Kenny Kennedy	Steve McManus
Karen Tew	Tommy Stockstill	Tom Graham
Bryan Wiggins	Steve Fleming	



Meridian Community College- Ivy Hall

III. How The Lauderdale County Department of Archives and History Began



Mr. Jim Dawson, Founder of LCDAH



**Mr. Ed Shields,
Director of LCDAH**

Untaped Interview: February 9, 1989

Location: LCDAH.

Interviewer: Randall Kirk.

Interviewee: Jim Dawson

Director, Lauderdale Co. Dept. of Archives & History,

My interview with Jim Dawson was about how he is trying to preserve the history of Lauderdale County. Mr. Dawson, born March 13, 1922, lives southeast of Meridian in the Whynot Community. Except for the years he spent before his retirement from the Navy, he has been a lifetime resident of the county. He has been a history buff all his life.

In 1984 Mr. Dawson pledged his time to start the Lauderdale County Department of Archives and History. He obtained a grant from the city to start an archives, a records management program for both the city and county. This Archives, currently occupying the second floor of the County Annex building, is being remodeled to hold these records and other historical information.

"In my search for information in some of these records," Mr. Dawson said, "I saw what condition they were in and it tore me up. I can show you records where people have taken a knife and cut out a page they wanted and now it's gone forever. Records were thrown about in various places and that is how they get lost." That is what got him started in trying to preserve the old records, many of which have been around since the beginning of Lauderdale County, over 150 years ago.

Mr. Dawson has applied to the State Legislature for a grant, and with that money he hopes to have a paid expert, an archivist, to help set up the archives this year, and have it open for public use. In his research he has discovered many old accounts and is now in the process of transferring them onto micro-film to be better preserved.

When asked about the progress he has made, he said, "We have grown slowly and I feel that is the best way. If we get this grant we're fixing to take a huge step forward."

He is currently working on getting the space ready to set up micro-film equipment and computers so the people can make use of all the information, that has been collected over the years. He also wants to begin the desk-top publishing of various local histories to be sold to bring in more operating money for the project. It takes a lot of planning and preparation, he said, to get a project of this size going.

The Archives plans to protect the records from being tampered with. Mr. Dawson states that to do research everyone will have to use a pencil, not a pen, so that if they make a mark it can easily be erased, keeping the old books from becoming sloppy. The Archives is here for community use so the history of the county will not be forgotten.

Mr. Dawson is a volunteer and receives no money for his services. He should receive great thanks for the fine job he is doing for this county and community.

[Editor's note: James Dawson died in 1997; Ed Shields, also a volunteer, succeeded him as Director. Largely due to the efforts of Mr. Dawson and the volunteers he 'recruited', Lauderdale County can take pride in its archives, the only county archives in the state. All city and county records - deeds, marriages, court records, school records, etc. - all nicely indexed and cataloged, are safely stored there, easily accessible for the public to view. Many researchers from other states now visit our Archives to find traces of their forefathers who came this way in times gone by.- M.E.W.]

IV. MERIDIAN AND AREA HISTORY

Meridian, Mississippi



WITNESSING MERIDIAN'S CHANGES



The Meridian Museum of Art, for many years served as the Public Library

Taped interview: Feb. 6, 1989.

Interviewer: Sharon Ann Merritt.

Interviewee: Mrs. Mary Earl Smith.

Location: Apt. B, 2205 7th St.
Meridian, Miss.

You want me to talk about changes I have seen in Meridian? Well, I have to go way back. I was born in 1910 in one of the older parts of Meridian. It now has, more or less, become -- a lot of it -- a slum area. I was born on the corner of 6th Street and 16th Avenue, right across from McLemore Cemetery. So, you see, that is one of the older parts of Meridian, but at one time 16th Avenue had some beautiful mansions on it. Of course, they are all gone, now.

I remember the first paved street in that area. In the summertime everybody sat on the porch, and they talked across the street, you know. It was chummy like. And each neighborhood had its own school. If you saw an ad in the paper for a house for sale, it would say near what school. Of course, it doesn't matter anymore. Meridian has changed socially that way ...

We had, not too far from where I lived later on 16th Street, within walking distance, about half a dozen grocery stores. Now I have to get in my car and drive somewhere to find a grocery store, so that is another of the changes I've seen.

We had our own neighborhood churches and the children grew up together. It was very seldom we ever got out of our own neighborhood. I first got out of mine when I left Witherspoon School to enter junior high. That's when I met other children from all over parts of town. That particular junior high was where the Senior Citizens' Center is now; it was called Big Central. Stevenson School, which is now no longer a school, at that time Stevenson was called Little Central. I was in the last junior high class held at Big Central because the next year we went to Kate Griffin. See, Kate Griffin was being built in that field right along in there, and my last year at Big Central the old school was condemned ... When it rained, we had to put buckets around, the roof was leaking so. Really, Kate Griffin was built just in time.

Upon occasion I tried to interview people ... For instance, I did an interview with Mr. .. Key. (Tape hard to hear.) Fred and Al Key were ones that broke the world's endurance record for sustained flight. They were the flying Keys, the Key brothers.

I had a very dear friend that worked at the freight office, and I did an interview with her about the old railroad systems we had. You know, Meridian was built on the railroads. We haven't been the same since they left, either.

Then I did an interview with... Well, Jack Stack's father. He knew so much... I interviewed a number of people like that, trying to bring out different interest and knowledge about different things.

Niedra English McDonald was another I talked to. She was prominent in musical circles. She was Jack Stack's sister-in-law, by the way. She told me about when she sang at the First Baptist Church and when she sang at the Jewish Synagogue. The Jewish people were very much interested in having music. They had paid musicians when they had none in their congregations who could do it, and she was one of those that sang, for years and years, as a paid musician at the Jewish Synagogue. That's another way our town has shifted.

I'll tell you something that has really changed in Meridian. When I came along we had big department stores. We had Marks Rothenberg Department Store. We had one Klein's

Department Store. The Rosenbaum Department Store, and Alex Loeb, which, at that time, was strictly a men's store, and Rosenbaum & Robinson, and then we had the big wholesale places. Big wholesale grocery places -- A.J.Lyon, Mar Brothers, Threefoot Brothers, Tom Lyle Grocery Store. We had so many big merchants, and every one of them had something in common. They were all home owned, something you don't see so much of now. That has changed.

My father, John J. Culpepper, had a broom factory. He and Mr. Murry, his partner, were both blind. They had a broom factory down on Front Street and it was quite a nice little business. They had a good many employees-- by a good many I mean ten or twelve. I'll never forget the day my father came in soon after the A&P Store had must moved to Meridian.

He said, "I don't want ya'll buying a thing from the A&P. Why? Because they don't buy anything locally."

That's come back to me many a time when I see stores like Winn-Dixie, Kroger, Sunflower and all of those [Siren in background drowns out tape.] But that's another thing that has changed drastically. We don't have those big home owned stores now. The money has shifted.

One of the interviews I had was with Mr. Harold Meyer who was with Maywebb Hosiery Mills. He was mostly interested in Meridian history. He knew everything and everybody, but he wouldn't let me record him, wouldn't let me use his name. I could have killed him! He told me this; he said that the early, early Jews that came to Meridian all came with packs on their backs. They made their fortune here. He said it was typical that when they saw that a community was going to be prosperous they came in, and when they saw it dying out, they left. I remember that on Jewish holidays, downtown. Meridian was dead. All the stores were closed.

They [the Jews] added so much to this town. They built the Opera House. They built Highland Park. They were interested in building up the community. Of course, we had some marvelous characters.

Annie Wigransky was one. She had a store downtown. It really wasn't a department store 'cause Annie had her own method of running things and she had her own bookkeeping system. I was Miss Library Smith. [Ms. Smith worked in the Meridian Library until she retired.] That's just the way she did it, she told me one day. She was always trying to trick me with something. She said, "Mary," (She always called me Mary.) "Mary, if every Jew were to die at the same time, what business would come to a standstill?"

I said, "Well, I assume banking."

"Oh, no, it would be affected but it wouldn't come to a standstill," she said. "It would be show business. They control it from beginning to end."

I've often thought of that. They are show people, and that's why you see so many. They are interested in shows. You know, Meridian used to be a marvelous show town. We had real live theater and people came from everywhere when they wanted entertainment. Back in the days when the opera house was in operation, the railroads used to run trains in from different towns when they had those big shows, and the people would come in. And when they had the fair (when the fair was really a fair, the Mississippi-Alabama Fair), they'd come in and stay for a week. The hotels were full because people were drawn to the fair. That was when it was held where the [Village

Fair] mall is now. fairgrounds, it was

Way back in the early, early days before it became the known as the Widow Higgins Plantation.

I don't want to keep on with the Jews because we had more Gentiles than Jews, but they did add a great deal to the culture of life in our town and to its business life.

[Tape messed up right here.] ... one time, both the courthouse and the city hall had auditoriums. Well, the courthouse had a huge courtroom they used for graduation exercises and things like that. We had workshop plays in the city hall, church basements, just wherever we could, wherever they would let us.

Now, Jean Broach was for years the director of the Public Library. She was a very determined person, and sometimes, a pretty difficult person, but she was one of the smartest people I've known. She lived and breathed library, you see, and if not for her our new library building would not have come to pass. The old library building, just down the street, has become today's Meridian Art Museum.

When I went to work at the library, I went to work [under Miss Broach] in the old library. She fought and fought for a new library -- that's the reason Meridian has such a fine library for a city its size. So many people from out of town are astonished at the type of library we have, and with the collection that we have.

I'll give you another little side effect here. It was Mr. I. Marks of Meridian, you see, that finally got us a new library. He was a personal friend of the Carnegie,- that donated money for libraries all over the South.

You see, the old library was built by the Carnegie Foundation and was probably the only one that included a colored library along with the main library. We had both. When I went to work the library was segregated, but when the civil rights act was signed it phased out the black library and the main library became de-segregated and was open to all. I signed up the first black for a library card at the main library.

It was an interesting time back then because there were so many literary clubs in town. I hated to see this time pass. The ladies would have a lists of books that they studied through the year and they gave book reviews. We loved that study, and it was out of those early, early women's clubs that the library grew. A group got together and said we're gonna have a library. It was out of those early clubs -- the Fortnightly, the Twentieth Century -- that brought in so much.

Now that's just about gone out of the picture. The women's clubs now have, more or less, settled into civic clubs, like those who are dedicated to keeping Merrehope [Meridian's antebellum home] alive. I know when I belonged to my first club a number of years before I started to work, and then later when I retired and went back, it was not the same. We had people from the power company coming in and talking to us. We weren't interested ...

In the downtown area of Meridian today we have a lot of the old buildings, and efforts to restore some of them is being tried. The old Marks-Rothenberg building was magnificent in its day. I can remember when, as a child, we'd go in, go in and stand right where the aisles crossed. You know? The north and south, east and west. We stood right in the middle and looked straight up to a skylight ... and there were balconies around there. The office was on the balcony.

In doing renovation on the old store they uncovered the columns on the 22nd side and of the 5th street side at the entrances. Great big round marble columns. There was a deep entrance on both of those entrances. Deep. And they had benches on either side in there. You see, it was an open area before the doors to the main store, which, of course, were further back and locked.

When you were downtown and the weather was bad, you could go in and sit on a bench and wait for a streetcar out of the weather. The streetcars were owned by what was known then as the

Meridian Light & Railway Company. It was really the Mississippi Power Company, and the old barn, or part of it, is still out on 8th Street. It provided transportation to every section in town, with the exception of South side. There was no streetcar to South side because they could not cross the railroad tracks. That was before they built the subway.

I grew up riding the streetcars. It's a pity you can't have that type of thing now as we did then because we'd beg and carry on until, a lot of times, my mother would let me and my little brother, John Leland, ride the cars. She couldn't go because of younger children, but she would let us get on right in front of our house and go to some play at the opera house.

When the play or performance was over at the theater, every streetcar in town was lined up out front. You went on and got on your neighborhood streetcar, and it would let us out in front of our house. We were safer there than we would be now riding around in an automobile.

It was just a wonderful time to grow up. In the summertime, they had long open-air streetcars. I guess, in a sense, you could compare them, almost, to a flat car on the railroad with benches on them. They made regular trips out to Highland Park because during the summer they had band concerts every Sunday afternoon at Highland Park and people wanted to go.

I grieve whenever I go out there, now. I just want to sit down and cry because I remember how it used to be. It was originally a fairgrounds. They used to have a racetrack out there, before the people who owned the fairgrounds gave it to the city.

H. M. Threefoot was one of them, and also Mr. Marks. They gave the property with the understanding that the city would spend at least \$10,000 on it. That was a lot of money back then.

The city spared no money. The first thing they did was to bring in a landscape architect. His name was Aarp – A,A,R,P,-- and he was from Switzerland. He had two daughters; one married Mr. (Tape inaudible) I think, was in the lumber business. Tilly Aarp never married but became prominent in business and professional women's circles.

Mr. Aarp designed Highland Park and it was just a fairyland. It..The flowers ... They had a huge greenhouse. That greenhouse would ... Oh, good night -- I imagine it would cover almost a block, at least half a block. The flowers kind of set the stage. If some of the flowers around the carousel house got kind of limp, they'd bring a new pot of flowers out of the greenhouse. It was always something blooming around there.

Mr. Aarp was not too happy with having the merry-go-round there. He felt a park, a real "sho' nuff" park, was a place to go to relax, a place to enjoy things, and not particularly a place of amusement.

Later on the park became a department of the city and had a regular caretaker. He was furnished a home right near the park.

That was another thing we used to do in the summer. Mama would fix us a lunch, and me and my little brother would ride out there on the streetcar to spend the day. She'd tell us to be sure to tell Mr. Owen we were there, and we would so he'd be on the lookout for us. There'd be men working around, and there would be a bunch of children there.

Nowadays the park's been chopped up into baseball diamonds, tennis courts, and as much as we need a building similar to Frank Cochran Center, it doesn't look right in the park. It looks like a warehouse. And I'm awfully afraid they're going to keep messing around until that carousel is going to just ... It's one of a kind and too priceless to really be in use, the type use it's been put to.

The area where the swimming pool is used to be a theater. The first open-air movie I ever saw was at the park. They had movies out there in the summertime, but then they made it a dance hall. They had a dance pavilion in there.

The first sin they committed against the park was when they cut a street through it. Traffic has no business going through a park like that, and now, I'm awfully critical, but I feel that way. Anyhow, that street has been closed, but the damage has been done ...

You wouldn't dream of putting your child on a streetcar or bus and sending him off by himself now. Automobile traffic makes so much difference now. You see, when streetcars were running all over town there wasn't more than a half dozen cars in Meridian. That was another thing that made it a safe time. Now you can't cross the street. I started across the street the other day and I thought, I bet if I was a dinosaur they wouldn't stop and let me go across. That's the kind of traffic we have now.

An then, I think we have more crime now. Well, I know we do. You can't go to sleep with your windows open and the door unlocked like we used to. We've learned to be more cautious than we used to be.

Mama got a little apprehensive one time when we were telling her about this old man that would come down and sit on the bench and talk with us. He gave me a, I think he called it a St. Joseph pin, to keep to give good luck. He always visited with us in the park; he was a patient from near-by East Mississippi [state mental hospital] and Mama didn't know about him. Later, when she was out there with us and met him, she saw how he was just a kindly old feeble man that was lonely.

That part of the west end of town, where the park is located near 45th Avenue, was known as the Highlands. It still is. The College Heights part of town was named for a college. Where the streetcar let passengers off at the park, a car line that came to meet it carried students and people on to the college.

The college was Beason's College, and it was a big college. There's nothing left of it now, but a double row of magnolia trees that's out there on 35th Street. There was a man that used to be the organist at First Baptist Church, that was the Professor of Music at the conservatory at the college. I always thought he had such an odd name. His initials made it odd -- J.E.W.Lord.

They did china painting at the college, and they had theater arts out there. It was huge. They had people from all over the country that came to that college. When the Beasons left they sold the college and it became a black college. It stayed for a pretty good while before it gradually died out.

The Mattie Hersee Hospital has been here an awful long time. Ms. Mattie Hersee, from New York, was the brains behind the charity hospital. The original Mattie Her see Hospital started out on Poplar Springs Drive. Later, Dr. S. H. Harston bought it and, for a while, operated it as a private hospital. Later, the state took it over as a regional charity hospital and moved it to a fine new brick building on the west end of town.

Then, Dr. Turner had a hospital here which later was bought by Dr. Jeff Anderson, who named it Anderson Infirmary. Dr. Jeff enlarged Anderson hospital and it has grown now to where it's just a little city. You can walk yourself to death in that place.

Now, Rush Hospital began with old Dr. Hack Rush. He came here from up in Kemper County somewhere, and oh, they tell cute stories about him. Well, you could tell stories about the Rushes from here on.

He was building his house and, when bad weather came on, he decided he would do a lot of the work inside. He liked to work with his hands. When summer came he wanted the house finished, but none of the local carpenters would work for him. They told him to finish it himself!

Next door to the great big two-story home that Rush was building was his hospital. It was no more than a bungalow, just a small space. When it got crowded they used to put beds on a screened porch upstairs. Rush, like all the hospitals at that time, had quite a big nurse-training program. They made a dormitory for the nurses in part of the big Rush home.

Later, Dr. and Mrs. Rush had three children, with the oldest being named Lowry. Lowry Rush was not only a physician, but he was also an accomplished musician. And then there was Leslie Rush, the doctor who invented the Rush pin. He's never gotten enough credit for that.

Mrs. Weebush, from quite a prominent family, was the first person in Meridian to have a Rush pin placed in her hip. Back in the old days, when an older person broke their hip there wasn't anything to do but just let them lie there -- or shoot them. I mean, there wasn't anything you could do, they were just doomed. The Rush pin has really done a lot of good in the world by giving a person more years of usefulness.

When they later tore down the Rush home to enlarge the hospital, they saved the columns from the front porch. Dr. Leslie re-designed the front of his house, and those columns are now on the front of the Leslie Rush home.

You know, Riley Hospital grew out of a baby hospital. Old Dr. Riley was a baby doctor. He shocked more ole grannies than anybody when he would have them get the baby a Coca-Cola when it had an upset stomach. He was a wonderful sort of a person, and he came up with new ideas like that.

Riley, also, had his hospital in a little house that later grew into a regular' hospital. He did not just specialize with infant care, but he was really a marvel when he took care of children. He was one of the first doctors that I ever remember that operated on infants.

Dr. Arrington, at one time, had a small hospital. It was up here on 22nd or 23rd Avenue. It's gone, now.

Meridian is more spread out now, you've got more developments. For instance, Northwood hasn't always been there, nor Broadmoor. They both grew on the north. We never dreamed that Meridian would be, the business part of it, would grow south. It never occurred to us that anything would grow [south] across the railroad, but it did. Well, the mall is down there, now, and Sears-Roebuck is there. There's so many business down there, now.

It's sad to see cities like Meridian moving out of the city and going to shopping centers, leaving the beautiful old buildings behind. remember the Kress building, the fans when going through the revolving doors. And across the street was the Rosenbaum building, which was mainly built for an office building. Part of the Marks-Rothenberg building, and that which was part of the opera house, was also an office building. Where Southern Kitchen is, that was, at one time, the six story Miazza-Woods office building. It was shaped just like the Flatiron building in New York. Meridian has more little triangle blocks and more little zigzags in it, and that goes back to a story. Anyway, the Miazza-Woods building had two or three fires in it. The first fire brought its six floors down to three. The next fire brought it down to one floor. They'd just put on a new roof each time and kept on going. Then someone remarked that if they had another fire they would make it into a wading pool.

So, that was a big office building, and where Home Federal is, that was the big Cochran building.

Well, then parking became a problem. As more people got cars they quit riding streetcars and parking became a problem. That is the reason you have now, instead of doctors having offices downtown, they bought property where they've got parking space. Lawyers, the same way.

I don't know whether it was a mistake, or what, but three big parking garages were built. We had three. If they would have just started off with one, it would have been better, but we, we had to have three, and it just didn't -- It just didn't pay off. They got to the point it was too expensive. Maintaining it with the number of employees they had to have, keeping up that equipment that lift those cars up and all, that was one of the main things, I guess. We were losing money faster than it was making it.

Going back to the little neighborhood grocery stores -- my brother and I would be playing and we'd go over to Mr. Dan Williams' store and get a dime's worth of cheese and a nickel's worth of crackers. Well, we had a meal. He said one time he had to go to Birmingham and on the way back, he thought he'd stop at one of these little ole stores and get a dime's worth of cheese and a nickel's worth of crackers. He said the crackers were 79 cents, and the cheese was a dollar and a quarter. That's how much prices have changed.

We didn't know what fast food was. It was very few -- Well, now, we had restaurants. We had nice restaurants in town. The Cosmopolitan Café' used to be there across the street from LaBiche's Jewelry Store. They had the best hot tamales and chili. It was run by a Mexican man. They had hamburgers, but there wasn't too many places that had fast food like we have it now.

There used to be a place, the Triangle Café', that invented and patented the Chic-steak. It was a little piece of steak, you know, fried in a thick batter. It was a delicious little bite of something.

Weidmann's Restaurant has been here since 1870; it's gone on through several generations. I think that when ole man Felix Weidmann started it, it was over there on Front Street, but I'm not right sure. Later it was on 5th Street across from Marks-Rothenberg. Oh, you could pass there and see all those hams and things in the window! Then they moved to the location where they are now. They used to stay open 24 hours a day. They said they didn't have a key to the door. That's when we had all the railroads.

So many railroads! At one time we had 29 passenger trains coming in and out of here, and the freight traffic was terrific. Railroad people would come into Weidmann's all during the night, all hours, getting something to eat and getting coffee. When the railroads slowed down, Weidman's "night trade" began to drop off and they began closing at night.

But, back in the old days, we would have a Little Theater play and when the play was over about eleven, eleven-thirty, we'd go upstairs at Weidman's to wind up the night. They have made the Downtown Club upstairs now, but not same in the same area. When you go into Weidmann's you'll see the stairs that we used to go up to get a midnight snack. I grew up, I think, in a very interesting time in Meridian's history.

This property right here where I'm living was one of the Rosenbaum's home. In fact, a lot of the material in this apartment came out of the original home. Where Meridian library is now was once the A. J. Lyon home. Mrs. Lyon was a Rosenbaum.

That happened a lot of times. When a daughter of the original family got married, they would build next to them. Over on 14th Street, right off of 16th Avenue, there was a Cliff

Williams who had General Machine & Supply Co. They had two daughters, and when they married they each built a home beside him. He had one daughter on one side and one on the other. None of those houses are in existence now. Fifteenth Avenue Baptist, my church, was organized in Cliff Williams' home.

Now I live half a block from First Baptist, but I go back to Fifteenth. That's where I grew up. That's home, and I'm comfortable there, and I just want to be there.

I've just been talking off the top of my head, but I try to be as factual as I can. See, I was in reference at the library for a long, long time, and I worked there for eighteen years. When I first went there to work I was in circulation, but then I was in the reference department. When you are in that and somebody asked you a question, you can't say, 'Well, I think it's so and so.' You got to know, and be able to pinpoint it.

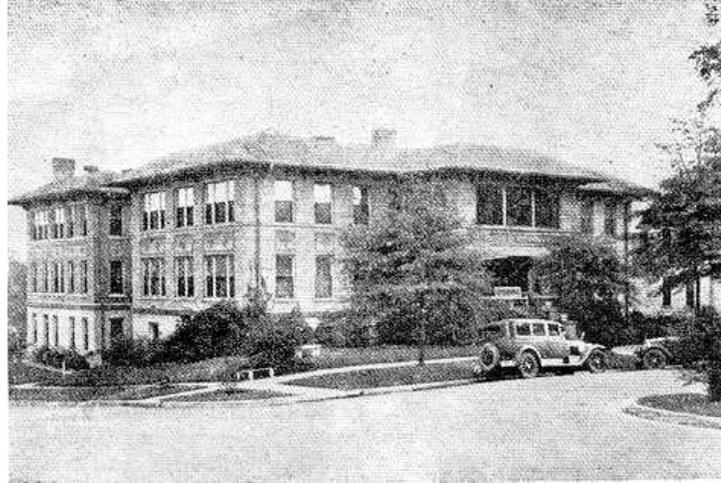
The question you never forget is the one you cannot answer. I looked for thirty years for a certain quote I tried to find. This is it:

"In the mud and muck of things
There's always, always something sings."

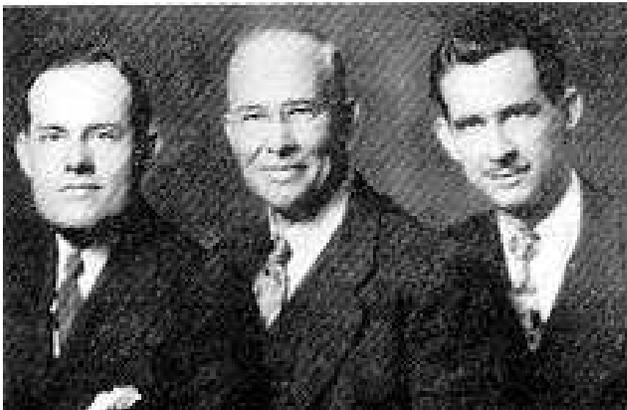
Years and years later I ran into some old books. I was thumbing through Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch when, Bless Heaven! There was that quote right there in Chapter I! I felt like an old love had been re-discovered. I had looked for it so long! But that was the thing that I just loved. When that telephone rang you never knew what you were going to be asked.

[Mary Earl Smith was a widow whose husband, Meridian Policeman Lavell Smith, had died years earlier in 1961. She died soon after granting this interview, and was laid to rest in Meridian's Magnolia Cemetery on July 19, 1995. M.E.W., Editor]

HOW RUSH NURSING SCHOOL GOT STARTED

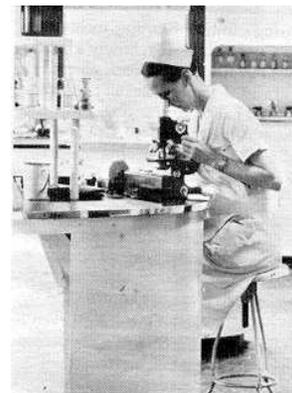


Early Rush Hospital



(L. To R.) Dr. Lowry Rush
Dr. J.H. Rush, and
Dr. Leslie Rush

Ms. Hovious using a speed
graphic camera



Taped interview: February 25, 1989.
Interviewer: Tanya Garrard
Interviewee: Miss Catherine Hovious
Location: Heritage Apartments
Meridian, Mississippi.
D.O.B.: November 26, 1909

Rush Hospital of Meridian was founded in 1915, and I came to the hospital to become a nurse on July 19, 1926. In those days they had a three-year nurse training course taught mostly by trial and error. Doctors taught classes in Anatomy and Obstetrics and that sort of thing, but a problem with them teaching was that they would be on call so they might or might not show up. I could almost count the lessons I had during my training on one hand. See, we would meet for class and then the doctor wouldn't show up for our Materia Medicae or whatever class he was supposed to teach.

When I was in training nurses did the housekeeping, we did the scrubbing. We did everything. The hospital was not departmentalized like it is now. After I graduated from nursing school, Dr. J. H. Rush sent me to Memphis to study x-ray and laboratory work. I was the first x-ray and laboratory technician at Rush's and just about the first one in Meridian. I think Miss Hettye Ellzey [Long-time Director of Nurses at Riley Hospital] and I kinda ran along together. She was also an anesthetist, and I became an anesthetist. I have done everything. I was the first of many things. I filled the first prescription at Rush's, like a pharmacist. I've done everything at Rush Hospital but mow the lawn! [Laughter] Cut that machine off and I'll show you.

[Transcriber's note: The volume decreased drastically at this point. One can hear conversation, but it sounds like it's from another room so a good portion of the interview was lost. The volume picks back up with Miss Hovious evidently showing photographs and speaking of Dr. J. H. (Hack) Rush, founder of Rush Hospital]

He bought the first lot that the hospital was built on for a thousand dollars and the one next door on the east side where his house was built. This is east of the hospital and that's one [picture?] of his home. Those lots cost a thousand dollars apiece. The lot where Rush clinic was built recently cost half a million.

This is the original book of Dr. Leslie Rush's bone pins which he developed in 1936. [Dr. Leslie Rush was youngest of Dr. J. H. (Hack) Rush's two doctor sons. For more on his 'Rush Pin' see the interview of Mary Earle Smith elsewhere in this book. Editor] This was the first one. The inscription reads, "In appreciation to Miss Catherine Hovious who has helped immensely to make this book possible." You see, I was the first x-ray technician and I was the first photographer. I made a lot of, not only the x-rays, but the photographs for Dr. Leslie's book. He made a second copy and had a few copies bound in leather like this one. He autographed my copy, "To Catherine Hovious, with thanks for helping to get this show on the road. Leslie Rush."

Now, here's a catalog of Rush pins, a little bit of them. I'm sure it's grown since this. Dr. Leslie built this special table he used when he operated to put his pins in bone fractures. This is what the Rush pins looked like. In fact, I can show you one. This one's the largest, and this one's the smallest. The bone pin that Dr. Leslie Rush developed in 1936 continues to be manufactured

by Rush-Berivon, Inc., in the Berivon Building on 19th Street in Meridian. It is still shipped to be used all over the world.

[Conversation again is inaudible; she is telling something about the first antibiotics. -Trans.]

After I graduated and passed the Mississippi State Board Exam., I taught nurses here at the hospital. In 1944 I helped organize nursing courses at Meridian Junior College. I had talked to Dr. Leslie about the problem of doctor-teachers that didn't show up to hold classes, so Dr. Leslie went to Dr. Horace M. Ivy [Ph.D., Supt. of Meridian schools]. Dr. Rush and Dr. Ivy collaborated to begin training nurses for three local hospitals, Anderson's, Rush's, and the Matty Her see. The college was already giving teachers courses in chemistry and physics. Dr. Ivy and Dr. Leslie Rush and I started training Rush nurses at Meridian Junior College and did not end until 1955 when Rush Foundation Hospital closed its training program. Later the college began its own two-year R.N. program. The Rush Nurse Alumni Association, started in 1942, is still active and continues to hold regular meetings.

It was Dr. Rush's idea that eventually they should train x-ray and laboratory technicians and everything like that, but they never gave him credit for it. In fact, -- I really shouldn't say this on tape -- it bugs me that they don't give Dr. Rush credit for starting the paramedic course they now have at the college. Before that we were training lab and x-ray technicians at Rush's to go out and work for doctors in small towns, you see, as their assistants. As time went on, we got so many criteria, so many regulations that we had to meet that it was difficult. That's why this plan for the junior college to train these people was great, and it has proved out just as Dr. Leslie planned.

I was Director of Nurses for eighteen years besides being an x-ray and laboratory technician. I turned the job of being Director of Nurses over to one of my students when they made me Head Technician. Then we had a hard time keeping an anesthetist. We'd get one and she'd stay a month or two and leave, so Dr. Rush said he didn't know anything else to do but to press me. Well, I learned a great deal of my anesthesia from studying a book until I passed the board that everybody had to pass. . . [rest of sentence inaudible]

I didn't have a favorite among all the jobs I learned. I learned to like whatever I was doing. I think if you like, love, what you are doing, it makes it a lot easier. I was just sixteen when I went to the hospital. I worked a year after retirement ... until I was 66. Through the years I saw many improvements in nursing and in medical treatment.

When we came, we student nurses lived in the old Dr. Rush home. We didn't have steam heat for several years but warmed ourselves by fireplaces. On cold mornings we would get up and collect our starched uniforms with their stiff collars and cuffs, grab our aprons and run to the warm kitchen over at the hospital to dress. We didn't have hot water. We had running water at Mrs. Rush's, but it wasn't hot. In the wintertime we would go to the hospital to take our bath. A certain part of the hospital was designated where we could go take our baths.

We would get up in the mornings and have breakfast in the nurses, dining room in the hospital, as the Rush home had no kitchen nor dining room. There was a separate table for students and graduate nurses. In those days we had private duty nurses that were segregated. Special nurses, we called them... [tape becomes inaudible]

Patients' food was sent up to the second floor by a dumbwaiter that was pulled up by a rope. I remember this rope wore out once or twice and we had to get a boy scout to come and weave it back together. See, it couldn't have a knot in it or it wouldn't pass through the pulley. This little boy scout could weave it back together for us.

At first we didn't monitor a patient's blood pressure when we gave an anesthetic. We monitored them with our eyes and ears and kept our finger on their pulse. We kept the Lord real busy back in those days.

The first post-operative day [the patient] had nothing by mouth. The second day they had tap water. And the next day they could have water that we kept in the ice box, the one with the block of ice. Not an electric one. The third day they could have strained soup and coffee without cream. Then they got soup and crackers. Then they had a soft diet, a light diet and finally a regular diet. We just about starved them.

They were not allowed up until the day after their stitches were out. They had a backrest -- we didn't have crank-up beds. This was a big heavy thing, about like so big, that we had to put ... well, I couldn't lift one now because I have a bad back problem. They could sit up in bed and the next day we'd get them up into a wheelchair. Then the next day they could walk. There were in the hospital about two weeks after a simple little surgery like an appendectomy or hernia.

Nowadays we expect the patient to do for himself the things we used to do. We used to give them a complete bed bath, following breakfast. The third post-op day they got a dose of castor oil. If the castor oil didn't work, then we used what they called a turpentine and it asafetida" enema. It smelled so bad everybody in the hospital knew it! An enema is almost unheard of now, except in the GI department where they have to clean the colon for the doctors to examine them.

We came on duty at 7:00 in the morning. If we were busy we worked through twelve hours, but sometimes, after feeding lunch, we could take turns taking off the hours from 1:00 to 3:00 or else from 3:00 to 5:00. There usually was only four of us on the ward, as we had only eight students; four on day shift, two on night duty, one in the operating room, and one in the diet kitchen. We served supper around 5:00 before the night shift came on at 7:00 p.m. to relieve us. When we went on night duty it was for a month at a time, working 12 hours straight through the night.

It was sometime way down the road that Dr. Leslie thought of the plan to pass routine medications at certain hours. In other words, every 4 hours they would be given at 8, 12, and 4 o'clock. Every 6 hours, it would be given at 6, 12, and 6 o'clock. Otherwise, we just gave it when we could.

The temperature, pulse and respiration were recorded every four hours. Nurses didn't take blood pressures. That was for the doctors to do. In fact, it was sacrilege to see a nurse with a stethoscope on. Now they wear them like they do their rings and watches.

They kept us busy and we didn't have much time for entertainment. I can still hear Mrs. Rush calling us students down if we got too noisy when we got off duty. We didn't have radios, personal radios, but we'd get to hollering mid dancing. When I went there the Charleston was brand new. The most entertainment we had was to walk to the picture show, from the hospital down to the Temple Theater. We had to walk as we couldn't ride in a car.

Another thing, there was a little grocery store a block down on the avenue that dead-ends into 14th Street at the hospital. It was a little neighborhood grocery operated by Greeks, the

Sadkas. He was awfully nice to us. We'd go down there and cut a slice of ham and dip into his cracker barrel and make a ham sandwich, or an onion sandwich, or something like that. We didn't buy a drink. But he was just real, real sweet to us ... a big ol' lug of a fellah. We would cut a hunk of cheese off, you know. Cookies came in boxes, great big square boxes, and maybe we could buy some cookies or something like that.

That was about the extent of our entertainment. We weren't allowed out, I think, except on Saturday and Sunday night. If we had a family or needed to go somewhere we had to get special permission. When we went to visit our family we had to have special permission to stay out after 5 o'clock.

As time went on, things got better. Times changed as progress continued, and girls were allowed more privileges than when I was there.

The Rushes treated me like family while I lived in their house. Mrs. Rush bossed the nurses, ran the diet kitchen and she ran the yard. When old Dr. Rush [J. H.] died in 1931, about five years after I went there, she visited his grave every day as long as she lived -- I think she died in about 1955. Her chauffeur trimmed her husband's grave and she placed flowers on it just about every day until she died.

Mrs. Rush continued her work in the hospital after his death. She supervised the kitchen. The head cook that operated the kitchen would knock on her door every morning to get the keys to the refrigerator and pantry, you know, and then she would come over. She had a small rocking chair in the room between the kitchen and her dining room where she sat and rocked.

She supervised the yards, the flowers, the lawn, and everything. You saw her in my scrapbook watering flowers. She was a wonderful person.

When I had been at the hospital a short time my family came to get me and take me away. [starts crying] I was living with an aunt and uncle but Dr. Rush said I didn't have to go. You see, I was just sixteen and they could have made me, but he said I didn't have to go, I could stay with them in their home. They were so good to me and that's why I think they were so special. It worked both ways. I worked hard to please them and I was special to them, too.

When we were on night duty, when I went there, we had a superintendent that made us wear bedroom slippers so we wouldn't disturb the people underneath us. Especially Mrs. Rush -- her room was underneath the part we worked in.

When I moved into the Rush home, there weren't but about 10 or 12 beds that occupied the front part of the building. Their home later occupied the third floor of both buildings and Dr. Lowry [Rush, brother of Dr. Leslie] and his wife lived in the wing over the hospital. Dr. Lowry Rush, Jr. was born there, and was still a little bitty thing when they built their new home and moved out.

I think the City of Meridian owes the Rush family a great debt for the sacrifices they made to establish Rush Hospital. It owes Mr. J. C. McElroy, Jr. [hospital administrator] a great debt, too. Come in here and I'll show you how... [Tape ended.]

[Transcriber's comments: This tape was extremely hard to hear. There are many places where it was impossible to hear what was being said and, therefore, important parts of the interview were lost..This lady's recollection is invaluable. This was very interesting and I applaud the participants for their efforts. - M.A.T.]

[Editor's note, March, 1998: As I prepared Miss Hovious' interview for publication, I wondered what had become of her. I found this indomitable little lady at her apartment in Aldersgate Retirement Home in Meridian. Although she has passed her 89th birthday, her memory remains unimpaired. She said that she had been born in Nashville, Tennessee. She and her two sisters, products of the broken marriage of James Thomas and Winnie (Garvey) Hovious, and were farmed out to various homes as they grew up. One sister, an R.N., graduated from St. Thomas Hospital in Nashville and the other became a Dominican nun. Miss Catherine was living with her aunt in Meridian when she entered training at Rush Hospital. Miss Hovious recalls that the first Dr. Rush had two sons and a daughter; the sister of the Drs. Lowery and Leslie Rush was Dorothy Rush who first married Forest Adams and then Len Berrel. Dr. L. Vaughn Rush, a grandson, is the only member of the Rush founder's family presently practicing medicine at the Rush institution. Rush Foundation Hospital continues to expand and has grown from the fifteen patients it had when Miss Hovious came, to it's present capacity of 220 beds. - M.E.W., Editor.]

MANUEL'S GROCERY AND MARKET



Taped Interview: February 12, 1989.
Interviewer: Karen Johnson
Interviewee: Ann C. Berden
Location: 739 Waterview Drive
Meridian, MS.
D.O.B.: May 8, 1938

My father had a small grocery store in Meridian. He had some customers that came in every day, tho' some came in every week and some came in once a month. He had charge customers that paid by the week, and some that paid by the month.

We had delivery service. The ladies would call in the morning and we would take the order on the phone and then go around and gather up their order and ring it up on 'charge' , in case they had a \$10 or \$20 charge, or whatever. We would fill the car up, or sometimes we used our bicycle that had a large basket to deliver groceries. There were some ladies in the neighborhood that, every time I went, they would have a piece of cake or a cookie, or something, for me, and I loved to take their order just to get the cookie or piece of cake.

My father bought the store in April, 1951 and it closed in November, 1970. He bought canned goods from the wholesale house and the meat from the packing houses. He bought vegetables from the local produce market, as well as from farmers that came by and left their -- sometimes they came early before the store opened. Dad opened up between 6:00 and 6:30 in the morning, but they would come before he opened and would leave baskets of turnip greens or collard greens , and sometimes even watermelons, out front. When Dad came down he would take it into the store. It was always left there, no one bothered it.

The bread man came by in his truck about 4:30 in the morning. He would leave racks of bread and then came back around noon to collect his money. Dad would take in the racks in when he came down to open up. If somebody had come by and needed a loaf of bread, they would leave money on the rack for the loaf they picked up. Nothing was ever stolen.

The store was known for its good meat. Our meat market was known all over the area for its meat and sometimes my father would run specials. My father would cut meat to order, like if you wanted one ribeye, you could get one ribeye. Or if you wanted three slices of bologna, you could get three slices of bologna. Or a half pound of bacon, or a half a pound of cheese, you know, the hoop cheese. He sold wieners and sausage and he made his own pork sausage. The first thing he did in the morning was clean the market, and the last thing before he left he would clean the market. People appreciated that. They knew that they were getting good meat from a place.

We also had a candy counter that had all kinds of loose candy and candy bars. We had penny candy. We had penny cookies. We also had two-for-a-penny candy and two-for-a-penny cookies. My dad had every kid in the neighborhood spoiled. They would come in with their parents and when they would go to leave, every kid had a piece of candy or a cookie. If Dad was in the meat market and couldn't get out to the cookie jar, he gave them a wiener rolled up in a piece of delicatessen paper. Every kid left the store happy.

We had a lot of black neighbors that came to the store just about every day and bought their groceries. We made no difference between our customers; the first that came in was the first that was waited on. Sometimes they would only buy one or two items. Sometimes they would buy a

whole bag full and we would deliver it for them because they would have more than they could carry and we would take it home for them. It was just like everybody [in the neighborhood] took care of everybody else.

There was this one black lady down the street. I thought it was pretty cute -one day she had her little grandson with her, he was still in diapers, when a fire truck went by and she wanted to go see where it went.

When she got in front of the store, little Bobby sat down. He wasn't going any further. He wanted to go into the grocery store. So Ada came to the door and said, "Mr. Manuel, please bring Bobby a piece of candy, he won't go any further." So Daddy took him a piece of candy outside so he would go with his grandmother to see where the fire truck went.

We had a maid that worked for us and when she didn't show up for work one day, we knew something was wrong because she was always there. So we got into the car and went down to see about her and she was real sick . Daddy said we needed to call the doctor and she said she couldn't afford the doctor and he said, "Well, that's all right."

He went back to the store and called her doctor and told him to come to see about her, and then come by the store and he'd pay for it. We gathered up soup and juice and crackers and things, and took to them to her to help her get well. Later, when my mother was sick or anything, Callie wouldn't let us go hungry. She would do her housework and go on home, but at dinnertime she would come back with dinner cooked for us to make sure we had something to eat.

So, all in all, the people in the community looked after each other. If anything was wrong, one made sure the other one was taken care of.

[On page 159 of the 1956 Meridian City Directory, the following entry was made:
"Manuel's Grocery, 4901 5th Street, Mr. Edgar E. and Margie E. Manuel."
- M.E.W., Editor]

MY TIME SERVED IN MERIDIAN COURTS



The Federal Building on 8th Street and 22nd Avenue in 1907.
It was used until 1932 when the new Federal Building was built.
The U.S. Post Office was also located in this building.

Taped Interview: Feb. 23, 1989

Interviewer: Jennifer Mathis

Interviewee: Sue Brown Thompson

Ve2400 50th Avenue, Meridian, Miss.

Location: Federal Courthouse, Meridian Post Office Building, 2cnd Floor

D.O.B.: October 28, 1928

I started to work for the Circuit Court in May, 1947. When I began work there were two other lady besides me, but one quit to get married shortly after I started, leaving Mrs. Annie Brooks and me. Annie Brooks, Mrs. Hubert Brooks, was mother of one of our ex-policemen. She taught me, really, everything I know about Circuit Court. I started to work as a filing clerk at \$15 a week, and never got higher than about \$35 a week for years.

I worked in the Circuit Court Office for several years under Cicero Ferrell, Senior, until he got sick. He got real sick at work one day and had to leave at noon. He never came back so, therefore, Mrs. Brooks and I had to run the office by ourselves -- I can't think how long that was -- for the balance of his term. At that time, the office only had us two deputy clerks.

Us two ladies kept up with the Circuit, the County, Juvenile Courts, and ran the offices downstairs. We also did the registrations. I look back now and wonder how we did it as there was only the two of us.

After I got married in 1951, I worked for about six months and then went on home. I didn't want to go back to work regular, but I was called in to help train every Deputy Clerk and a secretary for Mr. Preston P. Coleman, the new Circuit Clerk. I really didn't want a full-time job because, at that time, I had a lot of sickness at home with my in-laws to take care of, but Mr. Coleman needed me pretty often and called on me to help out.

I trained deputies, part time, up until 1966, or 1967, when Mrs. Jessie Brand died and they called me to work in her place. They called me the morning she died and I talked it over with my husband who agreed that I should go back as my oldest child had gone away to school. I accepted.

So, I went back to work and two years later, I threw my hat in the ring for Circuit Clerk. I guess I was one of the first women here that ran for office. I had worked in the clerk's of f ice for at least eight years when I ran for Circuit Clerk in 1967 against eight men and one lady. Raymond Davis beat me by 400 votes out of 20,000 to become Circuit Clerk. After I lost the race I kind of bided my time and ran a little dress shop downtown, the Capri Shop, for about four years. [It later became the 'Tweed Shop'.]

I was appointed to work in Federal Court here in the Federal building in 1973. Here I do filing and things like that just like I did over at the County Courthouse. I like this kind of work -- it is right where I want to be. I plan to stay here until I retire, which won't be long.

This is an old building. It was built, I've been told, in 1933. It is registered as a historical building in the archives. Notice the old desks here in the courtroom. I don't know much of the history of the Federal Building, but I'm sure some of the men working downstairs in the Post Office could tell you more. Johnny Robinsom, the custodian there, could tell you more [of its history.]

I'm really partial to our courtroom. It's beautiful. It was planned by a Federal Judge by the name of Holmes; Judge Holmes. His wife designed it. I've seen other courtrooms in our district --

we have five in the Southern District of Mississippi -- and I'm partial to ours. Everybody who comes in has a fit about our courtroom. It's the prettiest one.

Gulfport had a pretty old courtroom, but they have a modern courtroom now. Biloxi had a very old courtroom, but they're now in a modern building. Jackson has a beautiful courtroom like ours, but 'civil rights' caused them to have to cover the mural in the back so it can't show; it was painted during the reconstruction days. They say they have a real pretty courtroom in Vicksburg, though I've not seen it. Hattiesburg has a modern courtroom.

Ours is the only one that has not been changed. It has seen exciting events taking place inside its old walls; in 1974 we had a tremendous bank robbery case.

We had four bank robbers who had been robbing banks all over the states, not just in Mississippi, but in Georgia, Alabama, Florida, everywhere. This was one of the biggest trials we've had since I've been here.

It seems that a lady who worked in a bank in Noxubee County, in Brooksville, happened to see a truck turn into the driveway of the bank and she thought it looked suspicious at time of afternoon. She called the Sheriff's office and they put a tracer on this truck and hauled them in for an improper tag. It turned out that they were the bank robbers that they had been wanting, the Dawson Gang out of Alabama. They brought them to Meridian. John Hopkins, the FBI guy at the time, happened to check with the local motel out here, the Holiday Inn, where he found men registering for all of these other fellows as they were coming from Brookville to Meridian. They caught them all and put them in jail here. (At that time, we could put our prisoners in jail, but we can't now. Now we have to take them to Jackson because Meridian's jail is no longer approved for Federal prisoners.)

We had a Magistrate here at that time, Richard Wilbourn, who came over and turned them loose on bond. Judge Wilbourn didn't know how bad they were when he let them out. While they were out on bond they robbed banks everywhere that you could think of.

We do not have a permanent Judge here. My cases can be tried in Hattiesburg or Jackson, or Biloxi, anywhere the Judge sees fit to try them as he travels. Because we do not have a judge, the Judge travels over here from Jackson. He can go all over the District and try any case, that has his initials on it, wherever he wants to hold his court.

Anyway, at that time Judge Russell, the Senior Judge who has since retired, had this case. He decided they'd pick a jury at Hattiesburg and have the trial there. It came up a mistrial because while Judge Russell was being registered into a motel, a bunch of girls went to the motel and got them a room and the Judge had to move. It was the same group of girls that filled the courthouse halls whenever we had a motion or anything on these outlaws.

In other words, they finally had the trial here. One robber had been killed while robbing another bank, leaving only three to stand trial. They were found guilty, and the afternoon the Judge was to pass sentence, I told him that I had a fellow come into the office about 8:30 that morning that wanted to know where the prisoners were. I told him he couldn't see the prisoners and he left, but then he called me every 30 minutes wanting to know where they were. At 12:30 when the Judge came in, I was a nervous wreck. I was on this hall by myself at that time, and the FBI was on the third floor.

We have a waiting room that is really a little jail, just a sit-in jail for prisoners to wait while being sentenced and before they can be taken on to Jackson. The Marshals had brought in the prisoners and had locked them up in there.

When the Judge and I returned from lunch he asked the Marshals had they let anybody talk to the men, and he said, "Yeah, some guy came up and talked with them but that was all."

I had to act as the Judge's Deputy Clerk in the courtroom as his regular Deputy had not come with him. We walked into the courtroom and found it filled with the girls that followed the gang. The Judge gave each man 40 years and a \$40,000 fine. Well, if they have that much sentence on them they don't care if they kill you or not. It was a trying time for me because we had no Marshals up here at all, just the two that had brought the prisoners in. The guy that had come up to see the boys in jail kept coming in at every interval, every hour, waiting for the Judge to come out. The Judge told me that he was registered here, but that he was going back to Jackson. We took him down the back way, which goes out the back.

These same bank robbers tried to escape in Jackson on Thursday after they carried them back, and that was a trying time for me. It was so quiet up here you could hear a pin drop, and I got nervous headaches for a while.

That was the biggest case we had tried over here, although we did have a big marijuana case up here once when they were caught hauling marijuana through the state. The state picked the suspects up down at Waynesboro with a U-Haul truck of marijuana and they burned it. The state turned them loose and we [the Federal government] got them. We had those boys for several years because the Judge would let one go on a plea bargain, knowing that he wasn't going to live, but he could give us information.

We had sixteen guys for trial, and their ring-leader was a girl!

We had her for three years before she skipped bail. Over the years she's done it again, so hopefully, she's in a penitentiary somewhere serving our time and the additional time she got for that.

As fast as they got out of jail, the guys would call the Judge and say "somebody's after me". You know, after a case like that they're not going to be allowed to live. Their life's no good if they get out. The Feds tried to get as much information as they could from them before they were sent to the pen. We convicted sixteen felons like that.

We had one big case here with Jack Stack and Teleco last year. It was a \$17 million lawsuit and Jack Stack won.

If we had a murder case over in the County Courthouse when I worked there in the Circuit court between 1947 and 1954, if a guilty verdict came in and the man was sentenced to the electric chair. They had an old man who would come to the courthouse with his son, about sixteen years old, and they would park their great big steel-body truck next to the Circuit Clerk's Office in the back of the building. They ran electric cords up through the second floor window to an old wooden chair in the Circuit Courtroom. That day they would shave the prisoner's head and then, a minute after midnight, they would pull the lever for him to be executed. I remember four or five executions, I can't remember the number right off.

The last local execution took place in 1954, I think, when they stopped carrying the electric chair around. Before that this old fellow brought the chair around in his thick steel truck, going around from county to county as needed.. It was gruesome! I would go in there the next day and smell where ... (Ugh!) And I had to write all that down! I had to write several of the executions where it would tell you when you would, when they would, pull that lever, a minute after midnight, and so forth.

I don't think they use the electric chair now. They sentence them to the gas chamber, I think. They take them to the gas chamber, or give them an injection, one or the other. Now they are all taken to the pen. at Parchman to be executed, so I don't know. [END OF TAPE.]

**ENTERPRISE, A TOWN IN
CLARKE COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI**



Taped Interview: February 18, 1989.
Interviewer: Sylvia Wallace
Interviewee: Mrs. Christine Buckley, Mayor of Enterprise
Location: Route 2, Box 89-A
Enterprise, Miss. 39330
D.O.B.: June 29, 1910

This Enterprise area was once a part of the Choctaw Indian tribe holdings. It had a good water supply due to the fact that two rivers [the Chunky and Okatibbee] ran together to form the Chickasahay. The Indians settled here along the river, according to the story, or legend, or whatever you want to call it. Most of us think of it as fact, because artifacts have been found to substantiate that the Indians were here. They camped in, or lived in, wigwams to begin with, down South River Road. That's the name of one of our streets now, the South River Road.

They [the Choctaws] were fairly progressive. They weren't known as warriors; they came to be known as a peaceful tribe. They cultivated beans and corn, and they made their living by small patches of agricultural products, but that was not their main source of food. The streams were plentiful with fish and they did a lot of trapping. There was a good source of wildlife here then.

I believe it was in 1699 that a Jesuit Priest was sent by D'Iberville from Biloxi to visit the Indian trading post here. After this visit, Jesuit fathers were placed in charge of a mission here which operated from 1727 to 1733. We understand that the home now occupied by Mrs. Edwin Chapman is on the site where the Jesuit priests landed. This site is listed in the National Register as a Historical Landmark.

The Catholics established a mission and a church here that was quite active at that time. They are both gone now. There are other churches here in Enterprise, but not that one.

Pushmataha, the last great leader of the Choctaws, was born in 1790-1795. The Choctaws' story has it that this great leader was born fully grown during a severe storm when a steak of fire struck a giant tree. When the smoke cleared, there stood Chief Pushmataha, armed for battle with his face all painted for war.

There were quite a few white pioneer families that began to move onto Choctaw land in the 1780's. The United States began to purchase areas of Choctaw land which make up our state in 1805. In 1817 Mississippi was admitted to the Union as a state, and in 1830 the United States purchased another large tract of Indian land from the Choctaws. Clarke County, where Enterprise is located, was one of 25 Mississippi counties formed from this purchase.

After the sale, most of the Choctaws were relocated in Oklahoma as per their agreement, but those that wished were allowed to remain in Mississippi. There are still descendants of those that stayed in Clarke County that live southwest of Enterprise in Jasper County around Vossburg and Heidelberg, and maybe in Organgedale. Logan is an Indian name I know personally, that is a Choctaw tribe member.

The newly acquired Indian land was sold to white settlers by the United States for a nominal fee. Clarke County, organized in 1833[?], was one of 25 Mississippi counties that was formed from the 1830 Choctaw land purchase. It was named for Joshua Clarke, a famous Mississippi jurist. The first census of the county showed 2,767 free whites, 16 free colored, and 1,334 slaves. That was a total of only 4,117 people in the entire county! [Indians were included with the free whites.]

Now, Enterprise was founded in 1844 by John J. McRae, who afterwards became Governor of the State of Mississippi. He had dreams of navigating the Chickasahay River on which we are situated. In February of 1842, he succeeded in running a steamboat from Lake Ponchatrain to Enterprise. Lake Ponchatrain is down in New Orleans, you know. I don't know why they named the town Enterprise, other than it was such an enterprising little community and they had great dreams and hopes of its remaining, I guess, progressive. Back when the land was being sold, new settlers came from all over. They came from Georgia a lot, and from Alabama. They had come down from Virginia, through Georgia into Alabama, and then on into Mississippi. The government had much land for sale, and some bought land and some were given grants. This home where I live, this house you are in now, was built of logs in 1840. You can determine that by the width of the door facings. I haven't modernize it in any way. This is the original. It is on the National Register.

They built their houses for comfort. They were agricultural people and planned to grow big crops. They wanted to be big plantation owners, in other words. They could cultivate anything here in the rich soil – the seasons were nice, the rainfall was good, and it was no problem for their crops to grow. All this made for a good agricultural community. The wood products, too. You can't leave those out because the trees here, the hardwood trees are beautiful. We had white oak, we had red oak, and just beautiful hardwood. We have the pines, too, so getting lumber for fine homes was close at hand. But you know, one of the fine homes here was made of materials brought over from Europe. It was right up here on this street. I don't remember how many years ago it's been, but they moved a lot of that lumber to New Orleans to build a replica of the home down there. I've forgotten what the owner's name was, but he was a partner of one of the Buckleys.

The leaders of the town refused to allow the M&O Railroad terminal yard to be put here because they were afraid it would change their aristocratic town and so the yards were located in Meridian. That was one reason Meridian grew and Enterprise stayed small.

Even before the Civil War, Enterprise had become a cultural center. Enterprise Academy taught Greek, Latin, and other high subjects, was here. Girls attended there too, because my grandmother went to the Enterprise Academy because she wanted to be efficient in different subjects. My Grandfather, also, was broad in his mind about educating girls. They were both educators.

In 1861 when the War Between the States broke out, Enterprise, of course, contributed her share of sons. This very house where we are now was built prior to the war, and Col. Robert McLain, for whom the Confederate Camp McLain in Enterprise was named, stayed in it while he trained soldiers. Inductees from all over the area arrived here by train to be taught how to 'soldier'. It's been said that the Battle of Enterprise was fought here but I've never been able to ascertain the exact spot of the battle. It is believed that it in the area of the cemetery over there where we have those graves, the markers for the soldiers. Both Union and Confederate soldiers are buried there, but we don't know who they were, although we have been furnished with some of the soldiers' names. I have a book someone gave me that claims a Presbyterian Church that was up there on the hill, right across from your grandparents' home, was said to have been made into a hospital for the soldiers, and wounded soldiers that died there were buried here. After the battle was fought, two of the local homes were used as hospitals.

Actually, it was more of a skirmish than a battle that took place here, and neither side won. Skirmishes were different from battles because not as many people were killed. There is a man in Meridian that had lived here at Enterprise, that knows a lot about that particular skirmish, I think. He is Willie Boggan, a organizer of the Boggan Chapter of the Sons of the Revolution, I think.

When General Sherman captured Jackson the state capital was moved here to Enterprise, but I don't think it stayed but one night before it went to Meridian. Later in 1863 Sherman came to Enterprise and burned the town, and I want to tell you that your ancestors' home was the home that Sherman took for his local headquarters. I've been told, but I don't know if it's true or not, that he chose that home because it faced two streets, you could be seen coming from both sides. It was a large house and you couldn't tell the front from the back; on each end it had pretty red stained glass doors. Being brought up a Southerner, I remember that we hated Sherman because he came here, but we were eternally grateful that he did not burn that beautiful home when he left. He burned our bridge [over the Chickasahay River] along with a lot of our other fine homes, but he spared that beautiful home.

I have a recollection of the graciousness of -- let's see, I guess it's your great-grandmother, or great-great-grandmother. Mr. Willie was your grandfather and she was his mother, so she would be your great-grandmother, Mrs. Katie. They weren't there while the war was going on, but they came to live there a short time afterward.

Mrs. Katie was one of the most gracious ladies you ever saw. She was never without that beautiful smile on her face and it didn't make any difference what time you came, you were always welcome. Now Mr. Joe was, of course, just as nice as Mrs. Katie, but we loved Mrs. Katie because she had a cookie jar open all the time. I want you to know when you go by the house, you can see some of the blooms that come from her bulbs she left in front. People came and got some of the bulbs from her beautiful yard on the other side. I don't want you to go on the other street and look because it's not as pretty as it was. When she was young the other side had the same amount of flowers, but the present occupant doesn't keep it like it was.

I believe a textile mill wanted to come here right after the Civil War, but no-o-o. People didn't want this to become known as a textile town. They just didn't want it. They were too aristocratic or something on that order. But Smith down in Stonewall sold property to the people and they put up a textile mill there. That's all I can tell you about that.

You can't tell it now, but on this side of the street there was a string of stores and a hotel, and the lumber company that came in here later in the 1800's. I'm trying to think of their name. The majority of old homes and businesses have been lost to fire and floods. You see, this was a flood zone over here so they had to move to the other side onto higher ground to keep from losing their home. Your people were all merchants and your store was one of the stores, and the Buckley store was one my husband's grandfather owned, with the bank. When I say store, that was a general merchandise store which included groceries. They did what you call 'furnish' farmers with a year's supply of seed and fertilizer and all, as well as staple groceries. They could outfit your whole family with clothes. They had a millinery store and shoes, and all kinds of material, any kind of dress materials you wanted to buy; silks, satins, laces. Anything in the world that you could mention, they had it here. There was a long stretch of street behind this long range of stores and where drummers brought their wares to spread on tables in back. Why they called them drummers, I don't know. Because they were salesmen who drummed up trade, I guess. The local merchants would go from one table to the other to buy supplies for their stores.

A drummer traveled around from town to town. After he came to Enterprise he would go to Quitman, or to Pachuta, or wherever down the road that was in his territory. He had two methods of travel; one was on the railroad, but Enterprise was blessed; they had the Gulf, Mobile & Ohio and the Alabama Great Southern on the other side, or the Southern Railroad, as they called it. I forget what they call it now. It's one of the best operated railroad, one of the finest in the country and it's still kept beautifully.

In the latter part of the 1800's, lumber became one of Enterprise's greatest industries. Lumber companies came here from up north to harvest our virgin timber and Enterprise, again, gave promise of being a bustling city. The name of the mill was the Brook Park Lumber Company. Some of the homes here were built by the people who came down to operate the lumber mills and they built their homes on the order of the ones they had back north, two story houses with basements and things. They brought our bank and a lot of trade. They even had horse-drawn streetcars. But this prosperity didn't last. Most of the trees were gone by 1900 and the mill went, too.

Cutting timber wasn't like the program is today, you know. People have become wiser and they replant the forest they cut and do that sort of thing. You know, trees are still one of our greatest industries. Wood remains important to Enterprise because we have a great deal of farms that do nothing but raise trees and livestock.

Enterprise was an easy place to come to and the land was flat over on this side of the river. They had loading ramps to load the trains with, which made it easy to load. People would bring their cotton in, and their corn in, to ship it. They also did what was called 'truck farming'. Early in the spring, one of the things they shipped a lot of was English peas, they called them. That was quite a crop for farmers; they made a good bit off it.

I was a child when World War I came along. I can tell you what the war did for Enterprise, it supplied a lot of our local belles with husbands! There was a regiment of soldiers of some sort stationed here to guard our railroads. Two main railroads of the United States, you see, ran through here to connect the seaports of New Orleans and Mobile with the north.

There are so many interesting things that have happened here through the years. I thought Enterprise was a huge town when I was a little girl because we had so many more things moving and going on then than we have now. I'm afraid I have rambled like I always do when I get to talking about Enterprise. I love it so much. It's such a joy to have lived here and to have seen all the things happen. Of course, now, all the older buildings are gone. Most were destroyed by fire and flood. The river began to fill up, you know, and it flooded worse than it did when we were young. That is what caused all those stores to be ruined and torn down.

Of course, lack of having an industry here, too, when the lumber company went out of existence and brought about unemployment, also brought about having the stores closed. Disallowing industry to come here is the main reason why Enterprise is not on the map. Who can say that if they had let industry come in with their knowledge of engineering feats and other things they had at their fingertips, could have harnessed that river water to a better advantage.

My husband bought the last old building, which had been your grandfather's store. We kept his name on it because Willie was a very dear, precious person to us, and your grandmother, too, was my dear, dear friend. We were very close to each other. We had tears together and did all the good things together. We played tennis. We played basketball. We were on the track team. We

were this; we were that. Every movement here, we were in. Later she taught school, but I didn't teach. She taught, but I supplied her with children! [Laughter.]

We needed a new bridge in Enterprise and, as often times has it to be done to make room for progress, we had tear the store down to make room for the new bridge site. One more good flood of the river would have the store, anyway.

So, the building or the bridge? That was the question in my mind. I had to make that decision for myself because my husband had died. Which would serve the people the most? To look at the old store and say 'look what has been', or to travel on a good, brand new bridge. The brand new bridge won.

I have lived to see three bridges put there. One was the old covered bridge. It isn't there any more but I can show you a picture of it. Your grandmother had a Christmas card made from this picture, the Enterprise bridge, and she sent it to me. I think it was in 1930 when they had the covered bridge replaced. I finished high school here and then went off to school, and when I came back, there was no more covered bridge. It's a shame. If we could have saved it, it would have been a tourist attraction for Mississippi, but as I say, progress has to be made. We could have made great deal out of that, but we didn't.

We have a number of homes in this town that are on the National Historic Register. This one is, and the one over there on the corner, the other Mrs. Buckley, Mrs. S. O. Buckley. She died and was buried yesterday. That was her home and it is on the National Register. There's another one over there next door to your people, and another is across the creek from there. We just have any number of homes registered and we are fortunate to have people that have tried to keep them up. They are in good condition. That's two reasons I know that they would not let railroad shops and textile mills come in, and they must think that they did right. I don't know. They have rued it by now, but they still like to think they did right. I'm not the one to say. We do have a lovely old town here and the people enjoy it.

According to the last census that was taken [1980?], the town had only 607 people left. At one time it had one or two thousand, so we are getting smaller. One trouble we have is that people will not sell properties to let you build on. We don't have industries like we should, but in the future, perhaps, people like you who write these things about us and put them around, you know, could cause people to read it and say, "We're falling down on the job. We oughta see about this thing!"

Well, I hope I haven't rambled ... We've had a good time!

THE RISE AND FALL OF LINTEN, MISSISSIPPI



Taped interview: February 12, 1989.
Interviewer: John S. Slay
Interviewee: Julian Lawson Slay
Location: Route 3, Box 372
Quitman, Miss. 39355
D.O.B.: November 11, 1912

When I was a small boy, Linten was a hustling little village in Clarke County, Mississippi. It had its own post office that had one rural delivery route, and it boasted of one big country store, a grist mill, and a blacksmith shop. A school and a Baptist church was located there, along with the Masons' Lodge Hall. Linten served as community center for a sizable area of farms.

The only mode of travel at that time was by horseback or by wagon so farmers came to Linten to buy supplies, it being eight miles closer than the stores in Quitman. Linten had become a nice little village, a hustling little town.

My great-grandfather, John Leonard Slay, with his wife and two sons, moved into this area 'way back in 1838, the year he deeded the land for the Linton church. He donated the land "for as long as it was used for a Southern Baptist Church". The original church was built of logs, but later a shed was built along one side so people who came in wagons could put their lap robes and sidesaddles under the shed if it rained. It lasted until the old church was torn down and replaced by a lumber auditorium in 1948. The Fellowship Hall and other improvements have been added over the years, but the main auditorium was built in 1948.

One of John L. Slay's two sons, Grandpa Dollaway Julian Slay, married my grandmother, a Miss Lindon, and had eleven children. His other son, William White Slay, first married a Buckley who had fifteen children before she died. "Uncle Willie" then married a lady named Denmark and had four more children. Between Grandpa and Uncle Willie there's thirty children in the Slay family. Some of their descendants still live in Clarke County, of course, but some live in Jackson. And in Mobile. And in Louisiana. They are scattered out.

Killing and butchering hogs has been a family trade all the way up. Back in the early years, they would wait until real cold weather came [to keep the meat from spoiling] and then they would butcher hogs all day. They'd heat water and pour it into a barrel. They'd dunk the hog into the hot water until he was scalded on one end, and then they'd turn him around and scald the other end so they could scrape the bristles off the skin. Next, he was hung up by his back feet to be opened down his belly to remove the chitlins'. After a quick rinse of fresh water was dashed on, the carcass was stacked onto the wagon with others that had been slaughtered that day. There wasn't much sausage-making done, only that what was to be used at home. Of course, we didn't have electric grinders; our sausage was made in a hand-cranked meat grinder that clamped onto a table. Electricity didn't come through Clarke County until about 1943, I think.

At that time you just butchered as you saw fit. Now, of course, the pork has to go through a federal and state inspection. You have to have inspectors visit to inspect the facilities and the animals, both alive and dressed. It's a lot more sanitary now than it was in the old days.

In the old days after our hog-killing, the wagon-load of dressed hogs was hauled twenty-five miles to Meridian where the fresh pork was sold to boarding houses, hotels, and other places -- eating places. We'd haul the dressed hogs up there whole, and cut off each piece to order as it

was sold -- roast, sowbelly, ham, and so forth, however the customer wanted. Sometimes they would take a whole hog.

One day would be spent in traveling to a campground outside Meridian, and then go into town the next day. That night they'd camp in the same place and come home the next day. It took three days to make a round trip. We did that on up till they had cars and trucks. Then we could back and forth in a day. The dirt roads were deep-rutted and bad, 'specially in the wintertime when most of the butchering was done.

We raised most of our hogs on the open range. By that I mean, our fields were fenced in and the hogs ranged on the outside. We went two or three times a week to feed them in their open range. We had some hogs that were penned at the house, but the majority ranged the open woods where they rooted around and ate acorns.

Each farm had it's own herd of hogs that ranged the woods together. Every fellow called his hogs with his own certain holler and the hogs would come from a distance because they knew they were going to be fed and they would stay together. Hogs usually stayed within a certain territory on the open range. They would feed out to where another herd of hogs had been and then they'd turn back, so they weren't too hard to keep up with. We went two or three times a week to feed them real good and to keep them tame. They knew our call and they'd come to us for feed.

Our range hogs were not wild pigs. They had been bred up all the way back to the early days. Before vegetable shortening came along, everybody cooked with pure lard so you had to have some hogs that were kind of on the short, fat side, to make lard. They would castrate the males and spay the gilts so they couldn't raise pigs, and they kept them until they were two years old before they were butchered so they'd be good and fat. When I was a boy I went around with my dad in the spring to castrate the boars and spay the gilts. To spay the gilts, they took the ovaries out. They would cut the hog through the belly to go in and take the ovaries out so they couldn't raise no pigs. They would be sterile. (I don't know if you wanted that there on the tape.)

It's not necessary to do that any more. Now they are killed at five to six months so they never come in season. When you keep them till they are two years old to get more lard, that was when they had to spay them.

That's a complete turnaround from the way we do now. Now days not many people use pure lard no more like they did when lard was the only cooking oil they had. Now they breed more to have long-muscled, lean-type hogs that top out at five or six months. They are leaner now with more muscle and carry very little fat on them.

We have an open stock law now where you are responsible for your own animals. If a fellow's hogs are found outside a fence, he is responsible if his hogs damages his neighbor's crops. Each hog or cattle owner is liable for any damage his animals do. It has become necessary to keep all farm animals under confinement.

We were still living in Linten when I started school. It was a little frame schoolhouse that had a little 'ol box heater in there. At times it was pretty rough. It was a one teacher school that taught through the eighth grade. I would presume the teacher had around forty pupils. One teacher. Sometimes we went just five or six months a year, owing to how much money the county had. Some years we had five months, or six months, but later we got up to eight months. Our one teacher taught us all from the first through the eight grade when we would graduate.

They dug a well for the school, a square duct well about twenty feet deep. It had plenty of water in it. We all drank water from the well bucket and used the same dipper. The Health Department came out, finally, had us use an old crock with a faucet on it so we wouldn't have to dip into it, and they required each of us to have our own cup. We had to fill the that old crock when we drew water out of the well to drink. We couldn't drink out of the well bucket any more. That old crock's still here somewhere, I think, an old jug with a string around it, Mr. Harve Chancellor owned the mill, and all, in Linten. He first married a Slay, a cousin of ours, and they had three children. Then they separated he married a younger woman and they had five children. Between the children and all, they lived above their means and the first thing they knew, they had lost it all. He had accumulated most of the property around here by foreclosing on it. Then he was foreclosed on.

The little town began to fail because Chancellor lived above his means. As his family got too expensive he got into debt with the bank and that brought on their foreclosure. When that happened it took the town; the store, the post office, and everything, lost it all at one lick. After the loan company got it, the houses were all demolished and the town went away pretty fast. By that time we had cars, a better mode of travel, so it wasn't as bad as it would have been before we had better transportation.

We moved away when. Well, Mildred was five years old. We moved away about sixty years ago. Maybe we moved away about sixty-five years ago. The church and the pastor's home are the only two buildings still there. The pastor's home was built recently, one of the only two buildings in Linten now.

Yes, the town of Linten is now set out in hybrid pine seedlings. So, that is the end of that.

**A REMINISCENCE OF TOOMSUBA, KEWANEE, AND
THE OLD DIXIE HIGHWAY SCHOOL**



Dixie Highway School

Taped interview: February, 1989.
Interviewer: Chris Shelton
Interviewee: J. B. Gill, Retired Educator
Location: Route 4, Box 240,
Toomsuba, MS, 39364

I was teaching and principal of schools when, in 1929, I began a four-year term in the Rankin County Superintendent's Office in Brandon, Mississippi. At that time, the state educational program was operated on what was called an equalization fund, which was a very poor program of economics in the school system.

Governor White got elected Governor and our legislature passed what they called a budgeting system. Prior to the opening of school in the fall of 1930, we had to have a budget made for every individual school district and one for the county at-large, that had to be approved by the trustee of each school and by the county board. That was a great improvement over the plan that we heretofore worked under. It didn't increase our teachers' pay, but it increased the efficiency of the money that we had, and the operation of the school. It gave us a much better plan and a procedure for handling that money, so later, they gave us more money.

They gave us better teachers and a better curriculum, and all of that putting an end to the praying and carrying on. The school systems developed rapidly into a much better educational program.

During the early part of my administration as County Superintendent, all the children rode to school in school buses that were bought by an individual and bid in on a contractual basis. There were many instances where people hauled their cotton and corn in their truck. They took the seats out when they hauled crops, and put them back when they went to haul children. A number of years along, me and many others persuaded the legislature to provide money to purchase busses and take care of their upkeep. The new busses were more comfortable and safer because they were steel and had good drivers. Since that time our transportation has improved a little bit every year.

I want to emphasize that during these years, from the information I have just furnished, that we are in a much preferred situation today to what we were then. We have better qualified teachers with much improved curriculum materials, and we have better instructors than we had back then. All of this, combined with money from the federal level to supplement the money that local people put up, have made us, in the school age now, the school terms now, able to do a much better job of knowing what to do and when to do, and furnishes us with the materials we need to do it with. The school situation today, the educational program today, I would say, is in a very much improved situation than what we had.

I started teaching for \$55 a month and worked four and half months, and I had to discount every month, ten percent, so I only got \$49.50 a month. Now, any young teacher with any kind of good educational background could start off about \$10,000. That makes a lot better situation.

I think teachers today come nearer to getting what I would consider a good level income. Especially, it would be an excellent income compared with what they did in earlier days. I don't foresee any great expansion in money being spent for teachers in the local schools. There may be a small increment every year or two along, but if we don't get our tax structure settled on the

local and national level, there aren't going to be enough funds to do large improvements with all these public funds being spent.

During the 1930's when President Roosevelt was in power, the schools didn't have money except what came from local taxes and appropriations by state legislatures for agricultural schools and schools like Mississippi State where they had some support from the national level. But the average public high school got all its support from state legislative procedures -- plus a tax levy from your own district, whatever you wanted to put on that.

People didn't have money to add onto local taxes because there just wasn't any money. Living, home life and culture-wise, is much better now because the income of people is so much more. Coming from working and teaching and other phases of activities, it provides a much broader base for our supply of entertainments, education, recreation, and all these things are better taken care of now because there is more to care for those things. I'm in much better shape and live a good well-rounded life than I was back then. Personally, I can't see any reason for a depression right now, but a lot of people keep saying that we are going to have one. I'm still hoping we won't. I don't see any reason for it.

The school here in Lauderdale County had problems in administration and their trustees were seeking somebody to take over and do all the things necessary to get it going right again. They called on Mr. Bender, the State Superintendent of Education, and he offered my name and recommended me. So, they invited me over and I came and made them a proposition and they said they weren't going to do it, I wanted too much money. So, I went on back home and they went to Jackson and Brandon and talked to all the people there, and then they invited me back.

I came back and told them I wasn't "jeweling down", I had to have the money, and they said they would give me the money, but I had to promise one thing; that I'd be there next year at the close of school and give out the diplomas and all that. I said all right, you write that up in your minutes and they did. And I said write this up and I'll sign it and y'all sign it. I said I'm going to run the school and you're going to run me. If you come in here and tell me you don't want me and I'll move that night, but you're not going to tell me how to run the school or who to hire. I'm going to hire the teachers and you can approve them. And so I stayed here twenty-something years and never had a trustee to vote against me and I got a raise every year until retirement.

We had women who taught with us fifteen or twenty years while I was at Dixie Highway School. We didn't have people bouncing off and on, and off and on, and all that. We had an absolute, I guess you'd say, a perfect tenure from the time I came until the schools disbanded and went into the other consolidations. We never had financial problems. We never had a discipline problem. We had a good lunch room. We had a good basketball team. We never had anything to complain about.

We started here at Dixie Highway School in August, 1940, and left here twenty-something years later when they decided to consolidate the whole county into one school district. We were all moved to Lauderdale School for three years before half of us were moved down to Vimville.

In the 1940's we had a fine agricultural community. Everybody was farming out here. We had a cotton gin in the community and we had a grist mill for cornmeal, and we had cattle producers. All the small farms around were owned by black people who had a few calves and cows to sell every year, but now, everybody is getting jobs in the city, or somewhere. I don't know of anybody in here except Brother Barrett and Mr. Pickett down here, that do some farming. But that's it.

If you leave off the educational program, our community, since the "Great Depression", has deteriorated agriculturally. When I came here lots of people had cotton and soybeans, cattle and hogs, raised for produce to be sold. Now, I don't know of a person in our community that has raised hogs in years.

I don't know of anybody in our whole district that milks their cows. I don't know of anybody that's cleared any land or improved their farm. All have gone from improvement to deterioration.

We have one farmer, Brother Barrett, that makes some crop, the only one in the community, the whole district. He quit planting cotton for several years, but planted some this past year, though I don't know if he will plant any this year or not. I don't know, off-hand, of any cattle production outside of Lauderdale, except Mr. Pickett down there. Two people. The rest of the farmers have all vanished, gone to work at the industries in town.

All our young people are working in town, going to college and getting into school work, and some made doctors and some made lawyers, and some took other types of employment as their life's choice. We are absolutely on a deteriorating basis so far as having young people building out here and setting up a life to stay. Tom Bailey Lake is the only place here that's building up, and it's on the lake site where they are building small homes. They are not costly homes, just a place to live near the lake while they work in town and other places. Our community, as far as the number of people here that take part in community activities, are just not here. They go to town. You take your daddy over there. All that country in there was full of people in his age group and they all went to school there and were farmers. That's the only way they made a living. But now, with industry taking over, there's just not much left.

In fact, I don't know of anybody working in our area except at the truck stops -- we have one or two truck stops, the only thing I know of going on out here. We got a little country store here, but it's just a small article. How many folks y'all got working for you, two or three? And they're mostly white, aren't they? There just isn't any labor out here. The two black Barney boys work for the road building folks, they are the only ones. Well, one of them's through and quit now, retired. He just quit. Odell, I think, is still working.

We had 300-350 school children here when I came. The year we dispensed with the school and did away with it, we averaged 152. During that 20 years the school went from 350 to 150 students. We lost 200 children in that time. Then they came up with this idea of one county unit and one county school board. We couldn't do anything about it.

We [Dixie Highway] had the only real good school system and the only good school building. We had steam-heated rooms and supplies, a good gymnasium and everything in the world we needed. Lauderdale School didn't have anything like that. We had good teachers but they decided they would take them all and put them somewhere else. That wound it all up.

They sent me and most of my faculty over to Lauderdale, which wasn't big enough for us, but we went, anyway, and had classes taught in bedrooms of teachers' homes. At Dixie we left wells with all kinds of water, all kinds of lights and cooking equipment, agricultural school equipment and a shop for school buses. They cleared the buildings out, which in time rotted down, fell in.

Our children, now, on the basis of good education, are reared into the world in much better shape than when we closed up here. Maybe it became a better system than it would've been [had it not been for the consolidation]. There are doctors, lawyers, preachers, school teachers, and

several professional classes of people from Dixie Highway that went to school to me. All in all, I think, comparing our general health and economy with the health and economy of 1929 and 1930, it's a much better situation now than it was then.

During the race riots in Philadelphia we had little problem trying to find a consistent way to live with the black and white. I suspect we had less problems out here than any in this whole country around. Over in Neshoba County and some of these other places they had a lot of problems, but so far in this county, since I've been here 50 years, now, we have had very little problems.

You know the black Mr. Bob Gordon? He worked here at the school for me for 14 years. The center up here where the Headstart Class is was once a good school where Gordon was a school principal. There was 3 or 4 black schools around here in the community, none of them had water or toilets or conveniences of any kind, just had a shack of a building. I talked the county superintendent into closing them and putting a bus out there and they began using the vacant white school building. The morning the first bus went around to these little old schools it had to make four trips. Then they had to go back with two or three more buses they put on, to bring them up here to this school.

There were no objections -- nobody ever said a word about it. Just moved right into it, until after desegregation made the schools all one color and blacks began to go to school with the whites at all the county units. After this, of course, the old schoolhouse became the Headstart that is still going up there now. But we never had any problems, everybody accepted it.

We've never had a problem with the KKK here. I don't know that we've ever had a race problem in any of our schools since they've been [integrated]. You went to school out here until you went to high school, did you ever hear of any bad trouble? I don't think we had any. Our community is wise from the standpoint of being good, clean, honest, level-headed people that can get along with themselves and everybody else. We've got one of the best communities in the South.

We didn't have any [honky-tonks] in here until several years after I came. Willie Brown built the first one. We had, I believed, and still believe, we had the most sober community anywhere in East Mississippi. There wasn't a single one of those institutions when I moved up here to this road. The first one that was put up was put up when World War II came along and they put it up for a night club that had live music and dancing, beer and wine, and everything like that.

Later on -- you're too young know it -- they put one up here, coming down from the church where that honky-tonk used to be on the side with all that kudzu [vines]. They had a Methodist preacher from up in Indiana came down here, fell from Grace in his church, and opened up the night club up there. He was a real operator on good food. He fed people from everywhere. I mean, he fed *good*.

Well, that was in time of war and I had to ration sugar and coffee and all that kind of stuff to him and he and I got to be real good friends, but he was bootlegging all the time, see. He had that place over there for the whites. He got to studying about it and decided he'd build on an annex where he'd let the blacks come in so he could serve them, too.

Well, when he came in here one day after some sugar or coffee or something, I said, I'm going to tell you something. You came from a part of the country where that might work, but it

won't work here. He asked what I was talking about, and I said, some night when one of those drunk blacks comes out and insults some man there with his wife or sweetheart, four or five niggers and four or five white folks are going to be killed. Don't you come running down here asking me to help you stop it -- if they cut you down and tear up your place, I'm not a-coming. He said he hadn't thought of that, and that he'd put a stop to it.

When they came down the next Saturday night he said, all right, you boys and girls can stay here tonight, but you can't come back any more. And he closed it, the black side. Those blacks never got to come back after that one night. Course, he soon got caught with a load of whiskey.

They had a meeting about it one night at the church at Toomsaba and they asked people to get up and talk. He got up and said, "I'm going to tell you people something. There sits a man right there that didn't run off and talk to other people about me. He looked me right in the eye and told me I better close up half of this thing and get out of here. That's what I'm going to do. Mr. Gill's the only man around here that ever opened his mouth to me about what could happen. I'm going to listen to him because he looked me in the eye and said 'Listen, buddy, you are going to get clobbered.'"

He went over to Alabama and opened up at Livingston.

But, you know, there's a lot of people, and you already know it, or will learn it as you grow older, there's a lot of people that can't look you in the eye and tell you what's wrong with your business or what's wrong with you. They'll slip around and belly-ache to somebody else, but I can't do that. If you can't look a man in the eye and tell him, keep your mouth shut. Go tell him, go talk to him about it.

Compared to its early years, the little town of Kewanee has just gone down to nothing. You see, Simmons and Wright had a gin down there, and they had what they called a 'furnishing store' where they let everybody have all the fertilizer and everything else they needed to make a crop. The farmers got all their stuff there and seed for their cotton fields came from the gin. Well, that's all gone. They bought a new gin, but I don't think they ginned any cotton with it but for two years, and now it just sits there, rotting down. The closest gin now is way over there in Sweetwater, Alabama.

The store doesn't furnish anybody now, its just a big community store now where people can buy groceries and things like that. They don't furnish fertilizer and cow feed any more and the big storeroom is closed. Simmons and Wright that once did a tremendous agricultural business is not doing it now. Only one individual runs it now, Miss Bernice.

John McElroy had the post office, and Johnny Mathis had a big shop works there where he made and kept up farm machinery. There were lots of other things down there, like carpenters and all that. Now it's all gone, except that one lady, Miss Bernice. I don't know, somebody told me it was hers, though it's still called Simmons and Wright. She doesn't go out and try to do any big business. She's happy just coasting along.

[Miss Bernice Simmons, well into her 80's, was still running the store when this interview was given. She was the youngest child of Sarah Wright and Eugene Asbury Simmons, one of the store's founders. Mr. Gene Simmons built a fine home for his family in Kewanee near the railroad crossing near the Simmons and Wright store and gin. - M.E.W., Ed.]

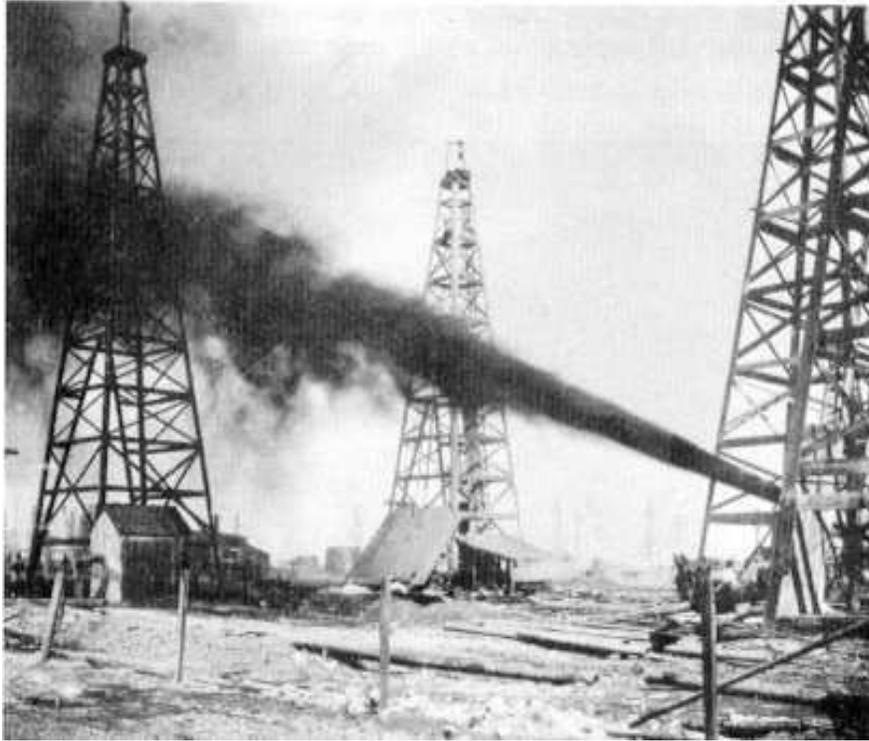
I don't know when the Kewanee Baptist Church was founded. It was an old schoolhouse and when I came up here in 1940 it was full of people every Sunday. Now there's Mr. Cobb, Mr. Pickett, and me, and we have six women. We have two men that come and visit every once in a while, Mr. Cook and Mr. Bass that lives on the road before the church. Bass works at the Navy Base and comes to church just a visitor, see. Mr. Cook and his wife visits lots of Sundays. We've got Miss Bernice, Mrs. Collier; one's a widow and the other an old maid. And Mrs. Gill, Mrs. Pickett, and Mrs. Cobb. That's the whole crop.

People have stopped moving to Kewanee. See, the folks down there never would sell their property. They have lots of land but they never would sell it to people to build homes, you see. If you don't live out here they're just not interested [in selling]. Simmons and Wright owned I don't know how much land, lots of land they kept rented out. Now all the niggers are gone and all the white folks are gone. They have soil just lying out, not making a thing in the world, and hasn't made anything in several years. There isn't the labor out here any more.

Kewanee is a good little community to live in. It's quiet and has good neighbors. Everybody gets along and everybody is happy. Sometime before I came the railroad had put up signals where the road crossed the track in front of the store. When they had that gin down there and all that business was going on there, they had a good hook-up with the railroad through one of their people. They put in a system of flagging traffic for safety when so many cotton wagons were coming in, but you see, now after the cotton has gone, they still have the warning signal lights. With road traffic ten times greater here than that at Kewanee, Toomsaba still doesn't have blinking signals at their crossing.

Here, a kid was killed on the railroad -- two or three people got killed between here and Russell. I know it's been three people -- the Gressett boy and Mr. Basin's wife were both killed since I've been here in Toomsaba, and there was the Robinson boy that was killed two or three days ago, a seventeen year old kid that hit a train. It tore his car up and killed him.

THE OILMAN'S HEAVENLY PARTNER



Taped Interview: February 8, 1989.

Interviewer: Steve Ross, who later noted, "Until now, Jack Stack has refused interviews with most every magazine or news reporter that has approached him. But being his oldest grandson gave me an edge ... "

Interviewee: J. E. Stack, Jr.

Location: 4706 Country Club Drive
Meridian, Mississippi.

D. O. B. : 1918 (?)

I was twelve when I first came to Meridian, Mississippi with my father. We stayed in the old Meridian Hotel in the corner room on the third floor. The highway was an unpaved graveled road all the way from the Mississippi River, clear across the state. They used big gravel. We had a blow out and before the car could stop, all four tires were blown out.

In Meridian the streets were paved with brick. It was a thriving community. Everybody was busy. We stayed downtown on Front Street in the Meridian Hotel and ate at Weidmann's Restaurant. It was quite exciting.

We were on our way through to North Carolina where my sisters were in school. We came back and forth through Meridian several times. I came to work in Lauderdale County in 1938 , doing core drillings up in north Lauderdale and Kemper County. We prospected for structure to see if there was a possibility to locate faults, looking forward to coming back and drilling deeper wells for a company that I worked for at the time.

When war came along I severed my connections with the oil company and went into service. After my discharge my wife and I were living in north Louisiana when I re-dedicated my life to the Lord. I had met the Lord when I was a young boy, but I had forgotten the most important thing -- to put God first in my life. Madge and I prayed for two months and read God's word.

We came to realize that we were not here by an accident, that God has a plan for each person's life. We believe He has a directive will and also a permissive will, and we prayed to decide where God wanted us to go.

I had followed a dream most of my life, ever since I came to Mississippi with my father when I was a youngster. We had come to Clarke County, Mississippi with a geologist from Shreveport, Louisiana, H. D. Easton, the famous geologist that had made the Sabine uplift (what we called a "Gorilla" from its shape) of north Louisiana. He was talking to my father, but I stood there listening.

Mr. Easton said that when Gulf drilled their first well in this part of the country, they had a show of oil in the Utah at about 3600 feet. It was heavy, black, asphalt looking oil. Now this is significant, Mr. Easton said, but it is nothing compared to what's going to happen in the future. Some of these days, he said, when we get rigs that are big enough to drill down twelve or 13 thousand feet, we're gonna find oil banked up against these barren mountains. He explained to us that the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains were down here under Mississippi, and banked up against those foothills, those granite mountains, we would find trapped oil. And he said, some of these days, all the way from Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, on across Mississippi and Alabama, and right out into the Gulf of Mexico, they'll find oil in the Smackover at around eleven or twelve thousand feet.

Well, I never forgot what this old man said, standing out there in field. We were about four miles east of Quitman where Gulf had drilled this well. It became my dream to find this oil.

After I got out of service and we prayed about coming to Mississippi, I came back to chase the dream I had since I was a lad. When we returned to Meridian in 1946 we came by faith. Between us we could scrape together about a thousand dollars, all we had to our name.

I came over ahead of time to see if I could find a place for my wife and three children to live. Through the GI Bill I figured I could afford to buy a house by getting a GI loan. We looked till we found a little three bedroom, two bath asbestos siding house on 40th Street that was owned by Mrs. Thompson, but she wanted \$12,500. Ed Kimbrough, the appraiser for government loans, appraised the house for \$11,500, and that was all the GI bill would pay. I didn't have the money to make up the difference. I went to sit with Mrs. Thompson and told her she certainly had a wonderful little place. It was right close to Poplar Springs School, and right behind Poplar Springs Baptist Church. And there was a little store up there on the corner. It was such an ideal place to bring up a young family.

After two weeks visiting with her, Mrs. Thompson said I was a sweet little fellow, and agreed to reduce the price, and we went to close it out. Tom Dunn, the attorney doing the closing, said, "Mr. Stack, you understand there are closing costs."

"Well, how much is that?" I said.

" 500. Dollars"

"Well, I don't have that much."

And he said, "How much have you got?"

"Two-fifty." I said.

"I'll take that," he said.

So God gave us a house. We didn't have all our furniture, but we had each other, and we had God first in our lives. We moved in and joined Poplar Springs Drive Baptist Church. We were happy because we felt like we were doing what God wanted us to do.

I went down to Clarke County to investigate where I first had my dream east of Quitman, and found that Phillips Petroleum had leased the whole area. And I thought, oh, somebody else is going to finish my dream.

I looked around for some kind of work to do over here. It was hard to find new pipe to buy so soon after World War II so everybody was trying to find second hand pipe. I got the idea of going back to where I had helped drill the core wells back in the 30's and 40's where we had just left the pipe in the holes. I worked out a deal with the farmers, whose leases had expired, for the salvage we'd left behind. The deal gave me three years to pull old pipe. So I went into the salvage business and pulled casings to make a living.

I had started in 1946 but sold out in 1950 to begin to put oil deals together, hoping that someday I would get to drill a well down there east of Quitman. I tried and tried to get into the oil business, but it looked like I just couldn't get ahead. I'd put deals together but with very little success. I was barely making a living. I began to question whether I was really doing what God wanted me to do.

In 1958 I was in Dan Reynolds' office in Jackson, Mississippi, trying to sell him a deal. While in his office, all at once I developed a severe pain in my chest. I had a clammy feeling like I was going to faint, and I said I had never felt like that before. You've got indigestion he said,

and gave me Tums and Roloids. I took them and then blacked out. Next thing I know, I'm laying on the floor and his secretary bathing my face.

"Oh, Mr. Stack," she said. "We thought you were dead!"

And I said, "Well, you see I'm not dead."

My friend Reynolds was running around his office saying, "Stack, don't worry. Don't worry. I've called the hospital. I've got Dr. Rosenblathe.

"The ambulance is on the way." They say his face was as ashen as mine was.

And I said, "Well, Dan, I'm glad it's me lying here instead of you, because if the Lord takes me home, I'm ready, and you're not!"

We may say we are ready to die, but you know, when I thought I was dying I was half glad and half afraid. I've never forgotten that feeling. They put me on a stretcher and I can see those people peeking from their offices as I was wheeled down the hall. They put me in an ambulance with an attendant back there with me, and headed down the street for 'Baptist Hospital. The attendant didn't hear it, but I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Aren't you tired? Wouldn't you like to rest?"

God knows, I was tired. But, you know, old Job, with all his troubles, said, "Though He slay me, yet I will praise Him." Even old Job got enough and wanted out.

And I told the Lord, "I've had all of this I want. I want out."

Then I heard the sweet Holy Spirit saying to me, "What I was willing to do for you as a twelve year old when you gave me your heart, I am still willing to do. How about letting me do the living?"

With these simple little words I remembered the Scripture in *Galatians 2:20*, that says, "*For I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless, I live, yet, not I, but Christ liveth in me, and this life, which I now live in the flesh, I live through the faith of the Son of God who loved me and died for me.*"

I said, "Lord, if you see fit to heal me and to spare me, I'd like to spend the rest of my life living for you."

They carried me to Baptist Hospital where they did all the things you do to a person that has a heart attack. They brought my wife over, and after four days Dr. Rosenblathe talked to us.

"You seem to be stabilized right now," he said, rubbing his bald head. He turned to Madge, "Based on what they said when they brought him in, I would say that Mr. Stack had a heart attack, but right now, he's stabilized. I want you to take him home but I don't want him to do a thing. Bring him back in ten days and we'll give him a thorough check-up."

Well, we went back home, but of course I owed a lot of money. I called my creditors and said, "Don't ya'll worry about a thing. The Lord's gonna take care of everything."

I guess they thought whatever chance they had to get their money was to help me, so they said, "Don't worry, Mr. Stack, Don't worry!"

I remember the people from the church would come to the house to visit. You'd have thought I was already in the mortuary. They asked, "Brother Stack, how you feeling?"

"Praise God! I feel great!" I said. They said I wasn't only sick, but crazy, as well.

I was supposed to go speak at Jackson, Tennessee in about a month, and I told the Lord that if he wanted me to go to Jackson he would have to have the doctor tell me I'm all right. But when I went back to see Dr. Rosenblathe, I fell like he was really trying to kill me because he made me climb up and down those steps. It would have killed an Olympic athlete.

Finally the doctor said, "I would have sworn that he had a heart attack when he came here, but now I've got to say he hadn't had one."

"Doctor, let me tell you what happened to me," I said. "You see, my Jesus healed me." And I said, "Sir, do you know my Jesus?"

"I'm a Jew," he said.

So I said, "Well, you ought to love my Jesus. He, too, was a Jew. (Incidentally, eight years later, Dr. Rosenblathe accepted Jesus Christ as his Messiah and his Savior.)

When I told my wife that the doctor had said it would be all right for me to go to Tennessee, she said, "I know where you need to go. You need to go to the state mental hospital Whitfield. You're crazy. We don't have insurance and we've got three little kids to raise."

"Well, Baby, with or without you, I've got to do what God wants me to do."

She said, "You crazy nut, I know that. I love you and I'm gonna pray for you."

Well, it came time to go to Jackson, Tennessee. I was driving up there about thirty miles south of Jackson. It was April but it was still cold. It was drizzling rain when I saw a great big guy walking along the side of the road. He wasn't even turning around to look but just kept walking, his hand stuck out with his thumb doing the hitch-hiking. Behind him walked a woman --

I guessed it was his wife -- with a baby in her arms and a bare-headed little boy about seven and a bareheaded girl about nine, walking barefooted in the mud and rain with her. I thought, Man, they got to be just going over the hill to a friend's house.

I got about a mile down the road when I heard the Lord just as plain as anything, saying, "What would I have done?"

So I said, "Okay, Lord. Okay. I'll turn around."

So I turned around. I go back. I turn around again and throw open the door of the car and said "Get in. The devil made me pass you by, but the Lord made me come back."

The kids jumped right in up front with me with their muddy feet and running noses. The man also got in front but the woman with the baby got in the back seat. I said Stack was my name, and he said his name was Evans.

I said, "Mr. Evans, do you know my Jesus? Have you been born again? If you were to die tonight, do you know where you would go?"

And he said, "Uh..My wife's a Christian."

"Well," I said, "She can't get you into heaven. She can cut off her arms and legs for you but she can't get you in." And I said, "Man, these kids are sick. They need a doctor. What are ya'll doing out on the road?" He said that he had been working in a factory in Chattanooga but the work ran out. They were trying to get up to Humbolt to pick strawberries.

"Do you plan to stay up there?"

"Well, wherever we pick strawberries."

"Have you got any money?"

"Naw. Ain't got a dime."

"Let me ask you something, Mr. Evans. Do you believe it's an accident out of the billions of people on earth, that you're out here today when I'm out here? It's no accident. Your soul is just as precious to the Lord as President Eisenhower's, but there's no basis for fellowship between a sinful man and a righteous God. That's the reason He sent my Jesus. Let me tell you about when I first met Him. I briefly shared my experience of when I met the Lord when I was a boy.

All at once the boy sitting next to me said he knew where God lived, and pointed toward Heaven. The little girl said she knew a song about Jesus called 'Jesus Loves Me'. We started to sing.

So there we went, merrily singing on down the road. I looked over at Evans and saw the big man had tears coming from his eyes. I reached over and slapped him on the leg and said, "Evans, I'm not going to put you out at Jackson. I'm going to carry you all the way to Humbolt!"

When we got to Jackson I pulled into a service station and told them to fill the car while I went in to call the hotel where I was scheduled to speak to the Gideons.

"Man," I said, "don't worry about that banquet. I've got a man out here that's lost and needs Jesus. Ya'll get down on your knees and start praying."

When I went back I saw the man that owned the station eyeing the people in my car. "Man," he said, "That's gotta be the most awful lookin' folks I ever saw!"

"You don't know the half of it. That man don't know Jesus."

"That's bad, ain't it? Where they goin'?" he asked. I told him they were going to Humbolt to try to pick strawberries. He said strawberries weren't ripe up there yet so why didn't I take them over to the Salvation Army for the night? That sounded like a good idea.

"Mr. Evans," I said. "The strawberries are not ripe up there so how about me taking you over to the Salvation Army. They can get you some dry clothes and some food, and get a doctor to the kids."

He said, "Well, whatever you say." I told him I'd also give him half the money I had with me. We went on over there and I punched the bell. The Captain wasn't there but two young men came out. I told them that these folks needed dry clothes and a doctor, and they needed some food. I told them I'd leave them half the money I had left if they would look after them and they said they would.

Then I told Evans I wanted to talk to him. Evans followed me around to the alley. I'm kind of short, about 5'6". This guy Evans was about 6'5". I barely could reach but I put my hands on his shoulders and said, "Evans, how about my Jesus? How about my Jesus?"

We both got on our knees, there in that alley in the drizzling rain. I started talking to the Lord about him. In a while he grabbed me up like a teddy bear and said, "Thank you, Jesus, Thank you for saving my soul."

He hollered so loud his kids came running around there and jumped up in my arms and kissed me on the cheek. When I walked out of the alley I saw his wife still sitting in the back of the car. She was crying. "He's not the same man that went into the alley," I said. "He's been saved." And she said, "I know. I was praying for him."

I gave them my card and I told them to remember that God loved them and I loved them, and that they would be in my prayers. I was glad I had not listened to my wife who had begged me to not pick up hitch-hikers.

That night I spoke at the Gideon rally, and then they asked me to speak at the Parkview Baptist Church in Jackson next morning. It was a big church that had two or three thousand members. The Pastor had died with a heart attack about six months before so they said they wanted me to take charge of the Sunday service, not just a Gideon message. I said that if they had prayed about it and if God wanted me to go, then I'd go.

So I went out there about a quarter to eleven, walked in and introduced myself. All at once I started getting sick, kind of fainty like I was about two months before when I'd had that

heart attack. I thought, "Well, God, you don't work against yourself, and there's nobody else here to preach, so which is it?"

"Go get the Chairman of the Deacons. Get the Music Director. And where is the water fountain?" I said.

I walked over to wet my handkerchief in cold water and began to bathe my face to keep from blacking out. When the Music Director and the Chairman of the Deacons came, I told them, "God don't work against himself. I'm going to try to go out there with ya'll and the choir when we get ready." When the time came, I went out there with them. I was standing behind the pulpit and there was a big Pastor's chair right behind me when they sang the first song. Then they had the first prayer. While they were praying the Lord just sat me down. I don't remember another thing until they said, "This is Jack Stack from Meridian, Mississippi."

I walked over to the pulpit and there was about fifteen hundred to two thousand people out there. I told them, I said, "I may not live out this service, but I'm going to go out telling you about my Jesus."

Now I don't know what the Lord said through me, but when I asked who wanted to be the first to give their heart to Jesus, two little girls came running down the aisle. I got down on my knees and they put their arms around my neck and said they loved the Lord and wanted to give him their hearts. I didn't get off my knees until somewhere between fifty and sixty children came down, aged anywhere from nine to twelve, or thirteen to fourteen years old, to say they wanted to give their heart to Jesus.

Finally, a nine-year-old boy came and said, "Mister, I'm a Christian. I'm a member of the church, but I don't feel like I've been living as close to Jesus as I should, and I want to re-dedicate my life."

I remember I stood up and said, "Wait a minute. Stop the music!" I said, "How much sin do you suppose this precious boy has in his short life? He doesn't feel like he's been living as close to Jesus as he should, and he wants to re-dedicate his life. I want to re-dedicate my life, too. Mother and Daddy, how about you? Grandmother? Granddaddy? How about you?"

The Bible says that a little child shall lead them. Let me tell you something -- everybody in that church made a decision for the Lord. The service went on until two-thirty in the afternoon!

Now, see, the thing about it was that the night before I had talked to God. I hadn't been doing any good in the oil business, and I had said, "Lord, do you want me to preach? Well, let me know! " I had put the fleece out. Now, after fifteen hundred souls saved at church ... well, Billy Graham or anybody else would have said, boy, he wants you to preach!

So I was going down the road thinking about these things and at the last stop light on the edge of town, I stopped. I looked over to the right and there was a teen-aged boy standing over there. A little pimply faced boy, and my door just automatically flew open. "Where are you going, son?"

"I don't know."

"Well, get in. This is a good place to start."

He got in and I said my name was Jack Stack and he said he was Thurman Matlock.

"Thurman," I said. "Do you know my Jesus? Have you been born again?"

"Naw, sir."

"Well, where are you from?"

"Gary, Indiana."

"Well, what are you doing here?"

"I'm trying to find a job. I just got out of reform school and I'm looking for a job."

"Thurman, do you believe it's an accident that out of the billions of people on earth that you are out here today when I'm out here?"

"Say, I believe I'll get out now."

"No, wait a minute. Let me turn around and I'll go back."

I pulled up in a kind of a gin yard and said, "Thurman, before you get out, can I talk to you a little bit?"

"Yes, sir."

I gave him a little testament that has the plan of salvation in the back, and the Scripture is 'For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that who-so-ever believeth in Him will not perish but have everlasting life.'

I said, "Hey, Man, do you suppose when it says the world, that means us? Why don't you try it and see how it sounds with Thurman in there."

So he started out. He said, "For God so loved Thurman..." and began to shake his head and backed up. "For God so loved Thurman..... and he backed up again. He tried to read it the third time when he started to boo-hooing. I started crying along with him.

"Thurman, wouldn't you like for me to introduce you to my Jesus?"

"Yes, sir," he said. "I'd like to meet him."

I started praying and after I got through I asked Thurman to pray with me. I had him repeat after me, "I confess that I'm a sinner. I believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross for my sins, and that He did rise again on the third day for my justification. That means, Thurman, it's just like it never happened. I do now accept as my Lord and Savior, and I want to spend the rest of my life living for Him. Amen."

He prayed as sweet as you've ever seen, and I gave him the little testament. I told him to sign his name in it, that he had made a confession of faith, a profession of faith. I asked him what he wanted to do.

"I'm going back to Indiana," he said. "My daddy is dead, but my mother's a Christian. I'm gonna tell her what's happened to me, and I'm gonna go back to school and finish my education, and I'm gonna try to tell my brother and sister about Jesus."

"Have you got any money?"

"Yes, sir."

"You didn't steal it, did you?"

"No, sir. I got it working in the shoe factory in that reform school."

"Thurman, I'm not going to tell you what church to join. I happen to be a member of a Baptist Church, but wherever you see a light tonight, wherever you are, you go into that church."

He had on a sweatshirt, blue jeans and tennis shoes. "Can I go in there like this?"

"Sure. The church belongs to the Lord, and He didn't have but one robe. It'll be all right. Just remember that God loves you, and I love you." I gave him my card and drove on down the road.

When I got home I ran into the house. I grabbed up my wife and said,

"Praise the Lord! God's called me to preach!"

My wife had heard me talk about preaching before, every time I used to drill a dry hole, you know, but she knew there was something different about this, though she didn't say anything.

After about five days I went downtown and told all my creditors that they didn't have to worry about a thing. I said God's called me to preach and He's gonna pay you.

"Oh, Okay, Stack," they said. "Okay. Okay."

About five more days went by, and one night after the children had gone to bed, Madge said, "Honey, let's talk. Do you believe I'm a Christian?"

"Why, certainly."

"Do you believe God put us together?"

"Certainly."

"Well," she said, "Don't you think that if he wanted you to preach, he would let me know, too?"

"Yes, but you've always been afraid that I was gonna go to preaching."

"No, that's not so. If I felt like God had called you to preach, I don't care if it's in Arizona or wherever, I'm ready to go. But he just hasn't told me."

I said, "All right, Baby, I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll get down on our knees and make a covenant with God. I'll go after the oil business again tomorrow, and if God blesses me in the oil business, then I'll know what God wants me to do. But if He doesn't, with or without you, I've got to do what God wants me to do."

I began going making a round of the oil companies to see if there was some deal we could put together. If there were no deals, I'd come home and tell her, 'honey, no deals.' She'd tell me to just keep looking.

Several weeks had gone by when a fellow with Carter Oil Company, which is now part of Exxon, called me from Jackson.

"Stack," he said, "I understand you're looking for some oil deals. You know, we drilled some wells down in Clarke County and we had some shows, but they really weren't commercial. Would you like to see if you can put a deal together down there to drill a well?"

I wanted to say that God had already called me to preach, only my wife hadn't heard it yet. Then I thought, No, I better be honest with the Lord God, so I asked the fellow what his deal was.

He said, "If you drill a well to 3800 feet, and if you are successful in finding oil, why then we'll give you 15/16ths and we'll keep a 16th, and you will earn as deep as you drill."

Well, it took \$25 to get a permit, and about \$250 to get the ground cleared off, so I made a contract with A. W. Williams Drilling Company of Mobile. They knew I was broke and they said I had to escrow the money in the bank. I told them I understood that. So I went to Shreveport where we had lived before World War II to sell the deal. Well, everybody there wanted to hire me to go to work, but nobody wanted to invest in a deal. I was over there about eight days and then I called home. Madge said, "Honey, that fellow Williams said they are going to be through with your well in the morning."

"What!" I said. "Baby, you didn't understand the man. I haven't put up a dime!"

"Well, I'm just telling you what the man said!"

I quickly got on the phone. "A. W., you're not drilling my well, are you?"

"Yeah, Stack. We were going to drill a well over at Morton but they said they didn't have that one ready, so we just decided to drill yours as we were going by."

"But A. W., I don't have a dime! Man, what am I going to do?"

"Well, we've already got done it now," he said.

I told him, "I'll guess I'll have to go to work for you and preach, too, to pay for it."

I was like ole Ern...Tennessee Ernie Ford, you know. Sixteen tons and deeper in dept, I groaned. I drove all night, just misserating, "God, forgive me for listening to Madge. God, forgive me for listening to that red-head. I am so embarrassed, Lord. You told me what to do, but I listened to her!"

I got down there about daylight and they had the pipe out of the ground. Unbeknownst to me, they had drilled down to 3800 feet. They still had 25 feet left on the pipe, so they went down, and at 3845 feet, which was ... Actually, the contract called for 30.... I guess they had 20 extra feet of pipe to make sure they had enough. So, they drilled 25 more feet. At 3840 feet, in the last five feet, it showed something, and they began to call for me.

I was sulking around in the woods. I didn't want to see anybody. They called "Stack, come up here. Stack, come on up here.!"

I wouldn't listen to them. Then they said, "Stack, come on up here, we gotta show you something."

I went on back and they showed me the electric log and said, "What is that?" and I told them I didn't know. We went in and took a sample, and it was the richest oil sand you have ever seen. (Today they call it 'Stack sand' ; it is only present there in that Junction City field in Clarke County.) We deepened the drill and found that there was 31 solid feet of oil down there. I'm standing there, and I'm crying, and they said what was wrong with me? They didn't hear what the Lord was saying. The Lord was telling me, "You nut, I've been trying to tell you all your life. All I ever asked of you was that you be willing to do whatever I wanted you to do. I want you to stay in the oil business, but I want you to spend the rest of your life going wherever I send you around the world to tell other people about me."

That was in 1958, and God is still my helper. He has always done His part. I haven't always done mine, but I have spent my life, over half my time, using what God gave me to go around the world, telling people about my Lord Jesus Christ.

I became a member of the Gideons about 1950. Did you know they have put Bibles in 137 countries around the world? Every 14 days they put out another million copies. Over four hundred million have been placed in the world. I'm glad that I'm a part of that.

You know I told you about the dream I had as a boy? Remember the place I wanted to drill when I was twelve? Phillips moved in before I could get there and drilled a well down to 12,000 feet. They had some small show, but not enough to make a well. When they started drilling I thought they were going to find my field! They are going to find my field! But they decided to abandon it. I went to them and did what we call a farm out; they farmed out 15/16ths to me, if I agreed to drill a well, and they kept a 16th.

A. F. Chisolm, my banker in First National Bank in Laurel, never would invest with me as long as he was in the bank. But in 1966 he stepped down as the bank's Chairman of the Board, and I went to my banker friend.

"Mr. Chisolm," I said. "I've had a dream ever since I was twelve, to find the oil in eastern Clarke County. I believe the oil sands are all banked up there. A big fault makes a turn there, and I think that's where the oil is, all banked up against those old mountains, just as the old geologist told me back in 1931. I truly believe it's there. You know, they say the tides and the affairs of men, when taken at their crest, will lead to success. I would like to invite you to join me."

He said, "I'm ready. Let's go!"

We drilled that well. From 3500 feet down to 12,000 feet, we had 41 separate oil sands, the prolific Quitman oil field four miles east of Quitman, Mississippi. It was the oil field God had showed me when I was a twelve.

I would like to think I am smart, but I'm not. I just happened to be available to God, and I found out he doesn't need my ability but my availability. I thank God he brought us to Mississippi. I love Meridian, and I'm here today because God sent us, and I'll be here as long as He wants me here. Now, if He sends us to Zimbabwe

Thank you, and God bless you!

AMERICAN LEGION POST 21



The Legion emblem you see is blue and gold with a wreath around the inner parts with the letters U.S. in the center. The rays of sun forming on the background suggest that the Legion's principles will dispel the darkness of violence and evil. The wreath that come in to form the center is in loving memory of our brave comrades who gave their life in service to the United States to ensure our liberty and happiness. The star in the center, of course, was the victory symbol of World War I. It now signals honor and glory, and the letters U. S. leave no doubt as to what we believe to be the brightest star in the Legion's sky. The two rings on the emblem -- the outer stands for the rehabilitation of our sick and disabled comrades and the inner one shows our commitment to welfare of American children. The two small rings that are fixed on the star itself -- the outer one pledges loyalty to Americanism and the inner one pledges service to our community, state, and nation.

Taped interview: Feb. 25, 1989.

Interviewer: Lyle Rose
Interviewee: Randy Rose, Commander
806 64th Ave.
Meridian, Miss. 39305
D.O.B.: August 25, 1948
Location: T.C.Carter, Jr. Post 21
2214 4th St.
Meridian, Miss. 39301

This old building where this post is located is in part of Meridian's Historical District. It used to be the Citizens National Bank Building and if you look overhead you can still see the old lettering of the bank's name.

The VFW [Veterans of Foreign Wars] and the American Legion are both large veterans' organizations. The Legion claims to be, and probably is, the largest veterans' organization in the world. To be a member of the VFW you must have served on foreign soil during a time of war or time of armed conflict. To be a member of the American Legion, you only had to be in military service during a time of war or armed conflict as directed by the Congress of the United States.

The American Legion itself was formed in March of 1919 in Paris, France after the end of World War I. The veterans that were coming home from World War I actually started the American Legion on a world-wide basis. The original meeting, or caucus, whatever you want to call it, was held in Paris around March the 15th or 16th, somewhere along in there, in 1919. This local post was started around -- I think, the charter says April, 1920, when this post actually received its charter.

This post was named after T. C. Carter, Jr. He was a World War I veteran that had some family living in this area, from the way I understand it. I don't know and have never been able to talk with anyone who was here when the post was formed and that knows the particulars of why his name was selected. I do know, according to the bylaws and constitution of the American Legion, that no American Legion post can be named after anyone that is alive. From the best I can figure, T. C. Carter, Jr. must have been someone who was killed during World War I, and maybe some of his friends or comrades decided that they would name this post in his honor. As to the exact reason behind it, I really don't know and can't explain, except that I know who he was when I see his picture hanging there on the wall. Why his name was selected, I don't know.

The Legion was formed by American veterans, the soldiers and sailors coming home from World War I. At that time there were no benefits for the family of the men that had been severely wounded or disabled, or even for those killed in action. There was no provision made for the family they had left behind to be provided for. The guys that formed the Legion formed it to take care of veterans, to see, as far as we could, that no veteran or his family ever went hungry or without clothing. That was its original purpose. Of course, now you see it working with a lot of other things, but, the original purpose of the American Legion was to see that the needs, not necessarily the wants, but the needs of the family of veterans were taken care of.

Veterans coming home from the war began working for other American Veterans all the way around the world. It was formed in France but became a world-wide thing for American

veterans in all the free countries. It worked as a group but it couldn't possibly handle all that was needed. Well, that's when the US government stepped in and started up government projects of relief for veterans and their families. The United States Congress formed the Veterans' Administration and other groups that work with our veterans. The government agencies to aid veterans, grouped under the Veterans' Administration, were started by the American Legion.

If a person that has been in the military, especially if he has service-connected disabilities or problems, he would definitely want to be in an organization, such as the American Legion, who is concerned mainly with the rights of veterans. There has been a talk of a lot of cuts made in the national budget to do away with some of the programs for veterans, or to reduce the spending on veterans programs. The American Legion keeps a constant watchdog, so to speak, in Washington, to see that bills or laws, or whatever comes that affects veterans, making sure that these things are not going to take away veterans rights. In that case we try to get the word out to our members to call their Senators, call their Representatives, just whatever that needs to be done. We do this on a state as well as a national level.

You know, a lot of time we'll say, "I don't need anything. It's not going to affect me. Why do I have to worry about it?"

Well, you've got to figure, right now you may be 35 or 40 years old, you may be in good health and everything's fine, but if the government starts now to take away the rights of the veterans, then by the time you get 65 or 70 and happen to get down or disabled and you need help from a government veterans' program, there may not be anything there.

I recall one time when the house of a veteran, who happened to be a member of our post, burned down. We showed up to aid and assist him to get back on his feet. When the hurricane came through on the Mississippi gulf coast not too many years ago, we were up at the radio station giving money to buy food and supplies for those coming here for shelter. The Legion often does different things of that nature.

When our veterans came back from World War II and the Korean War, they were promised a lot of things, but a lot of it never came across, a lot of it was never given them. So we try to keep the rights of the veterans, and the things they have been promised, to be taken care of and protected so the government can't remove them from us.

Like any group, one can only do so much. If you and one of your classmates went to your teacher and complained about something that wasn't right at school, you wouldn't do much good. But if you and the entire class went to that teacher, you might make a difference. That's the reason we encourage membership in the American Legion. If one man calls Sonny Montgomery [US Congressman at that time] and says, "Look, you know they are going to try to cut the budget for veterans by 10%." Of course, with Sonny, it would matter, but a normal run-of-the-mill Senator or Congressman, it might matter and it might not. You know, like the old saying 'in one ear and out the other'.¹

The American Legion is fast-reaching a membership of three million. By the time we go to our national convention this year, we should be three million members strong. That, in itself,

1

[Local Congressman G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery, who retired in 1976, was well beloved and respected during his many years in Congress. A veteran of World War II, he always helped our veterans when he could. Ed.]

makes a difference when you are talking to a Congressman or Senator and look at them and say, 'Look, I'm here representing the Legion. I'm not talking just for myself but for three million veterans. That's enough strength and power to get help out of some Senators and some Congressmen and make them sit back and pay attention to what you are saying.

This post normally runs between about 350 to 450 members. I think the largest membership we've ever had in any one year was around 500, and that was a few years back. At one time this American Legion post was the only one in town. Several years ago, as this post got larger, some of the guys split off and went to Bonita to form another post. I think we finished up with 354 members last year, and we will meet or exceed that this year.

American Legion Posts in different cities are involved in each city in different ways. Here in Meridian, I guess, one of our main things is working with and for young people. Each year we sponsor an American Legion baseball team which travels around the state playing against other Legion teams from Tupelo, down on the Gulf Coast and north to Pontotoc. This is a program the Legion has that really works with young people because we use have kids in it through and around the age of college. A youth can't be 19 before September of the year he is playing, but it opens the door to a lot of college scholarships.

The Legion is open to all American veterans, male or female, who served during the time of war of conflict -- World War I, World War II, Korea, or Vietnam. Sex doesn't matter. We have American Legion women members of this post as well as members on a state-wide and national basis. There is no reason for a woman that wants to, to not be able to join the American Legion if she meets the criteria of wartime service.

The Legion membership makes the final decision on what is right and what is wrong for veterans. Any post in the United States can write up a Resolution and turn it in to their state department headquarters. When a state Legionaire department receives a Resolution from a post, it will be brought up on the floor of the next state convention. If the members attending the state convention feel it's a good enough, or seems to be a substantial Resolution, it will be sent on to the national convention as a Resolution from, say, the State of Mississippi.

At the state convention delegates are nominated and elected to attend the next national convention where each state is allowed to send a certain number of delegates. At the national convention there are different types of groups and committees -- foreign relations committee, internal affairs, -- all the groups and committees that make up the Legion. The men who have been selected for these committees go in and read and study any Resolutions that pertain to their committee. They decide whether to adopt the Resolution or to kill it. But that's not the final word.

When the entire Legion convenes at the national meeting, the chairman gets up in front of the delegates and reads a list of which each member there has a copy. He reads the list of Resolutions, more or less by title, not necessarily the entire Resolution, with a brief statement of what it concerns and announces whether it was adopted or if it died in the committee. Now, if the delegates from around the United States and members from foreign countries disagree with the committee's decision, they have the right to call for a vote from the floor. In that case, the Commander will bring it up on a floor vote. If the majority of delegates disagree with the committee, I mean if the committee passes a Resolution the floor doesn't like, then they can turn right around and kill it. If they vote to kill a Resolution, the floor can turn around and vote to adopt it. The decision is strictly made by the delegates to the national convention.

This local post here, right after World War II, adopted a Resolution that first raised base pay for a private in the military. Yes, the first pay raise they ever got was brought up on the floor of this post right here. Next it was taken to state convention and they passed it. Then it was taken to national convention and was passed on the floor there. Once it was passed on the floor there, the national office took it to the proper people in Congress. It was fully adopted by Congress and the American soldier received his first pay raise.

If there were no American Legion the rights of your veterans would soon be over. I mean, there wouldn't be anyone to stand up for our fighting men who come back disabled, or the ones that lost their life while overseas serving in the military. There wouldn't be anything for their families. The veterans really wouldn't have a chance if it were not for veteran' organizations such as the American Legion.

One of the purposes of the Legion that connect it with children and youth, is that we sort of make a promise that the dependent children of our comrades that, are disabled or killed in action, will always be taken care of. As I stated before, we are not saying we'll take care of all their wants, but we'll see that their needs are filled. That, in itself, is the main goal of our children and youth organizations. We have several things that we work on with children and youth, such as our baseball and softball programs, because one thing we try to do is to cut down on the amount of juvenile delinquency by giving kids something to do.

One does not have to be a member of the Legion to play baseball. It is set up for anyone who has not reached the age of 19 by September of the year they are playing. Each year we get a coach, one of the coaches here from one of the local schools, whoever we can get we feel like is qualified to coach boys. We have team tryouts like any other team or ball club does, and we select around 16 to 18 boys to be one our team and will serve as part of the American Legion Ball Club. These 18 will play in games here and in games around the state. If their record is good enough, and if they are good enough, they will end up at the state tournaments which are usually held each August, to try to win the state championship.

The team that wins the state championship advances to the regional games which, around here, includes Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, and several other states. After the regional play-off the winner of that advances to the nationals. It finally gets down to the American Legion World Series. The winner of that is considered to be the best American Legion team in the United States.

The state tournaments, regional tournaments, and World Series Tournaments are highly watched by college coaches, as well as a lot of pro scouts. It's a pretty big event.

College scouts and coaches watch the American Legion teams and pick up ball players most every year. We've had some playing at Ole Miss. Well, Rob Boyd, that plays for Ole Miss, once played on the Legion team. There's Jody Hurst at Mississippi State that was a Legion player. One boy named Fleming went out to Southern -- he had played for the Legion.

This post also works with girls in a girls softball team. We try to sponsor a girls team up here at the Sammie Davison [Baseball] complex each year. We have a little girls team that plays out at Crestview Field, the new field they built out there. Most of our work locally, through the Legion, is done for the youth of the community.

Also, every year we offer an oratorical contest where we select out post winners and district winners, and state winners. They go on all the way up to the nationals. There are some pretty good college scholarship funds for the winners of these different contest on just about every level.

We also work with Girls' State and our Boy's State. Both of these programs take students that have completed the 11th grade and send them off for a week to either Hinds Junior College over at Raymond, or to the University of Southern Mississippi down at Hattiesburg. For a week the selected school becomes a fictitious state where these youngsters are put into cities and counties to run for an elected office. They have to run and maintain there state according to the Constitution of the State of Mississippi, which kind of opens up their mind to our state laws and constitution.

The American Legion Auxiliary is a part of the Legion. It's the wives, mothers, grandchildren, or sisters, eighteen years or older, of the Legionnaires. You can join the American Legion Auxiliary by your husband being a member of the Legion, or your father or grandfather being a member. It's the ladies that weren't in the military, but whose husbands are members and they want to work with the Legion. The Auxiliary helps us a lot.

Well, for girls under eighteen we have what we call the Junior Auxiliary, made up of the children and grandchildren of Legionnaires that come in and get started with the American Legion when they are young. It's for the girls. The Junior Auxiliary is strictly made up of girls. For the boys, or men, we have the Sons of the American Legion, made of boys and men whose father or grandfather were in the military.

So, basically, we have the American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary, the Junior Auxiliary, and then the Sons of the American Legion. Everybody in the veteran's family can be involved in the American Legion.



T.C. Carter Jr.

This chapter mentioned Mr. T.C. Carter Jr, yet no one at the post, that was named after him, knew anything about this Meridian native. Much of what was found out about Mr. Carter was discovered by Mr. Ed Shields director of the Lauderdale County Department of Archives and History, with considerable help from former Congressman, G.V. “Sonny” Montgomery and Meridian resident, Robert Farrar.

On reading the comments of Commander Rose, I found it troubling that the local post had little information regarding the name which it bore. After a very little bit of inquiry I realized why information was so scarce. First, Post 21 had sold its old building and put its artifacts into storage while arranging for a new home. Second, Veterans Day of 1998 marked the 80th anniversary of what we used to call Armistice day, the day World War I ended. The realization that the passage of 80 years had about wiped out the men who had the memories, made my quest an historical one, rather than a search for the recollection. Third, I assumed that the microfilm of the local paper for the period would include a full account of one of the last, if not the last, Mississippian killed in the conflict. I found that there were no microfilms of *The Meridian Star* for 1918.

I finally wrote to former Congressman, G.V. “Sonny” Montgomery since he is a member of our Directorate and had been involved in Veterans affairs for all of his years in Washington. He quickly answered that he would try but the Department in charge usually wanted a request from the next-of-kin and was bound by privacy rules. It seemed as though we might be blocked once more. Then, one day I got a call from Washington. It was the exuberant voice of Sonny: “I’ve got it all!” “All” turned out to be 30 photocopied pages dealing with the battle in which T.C. Carter, Jr. was killed. This information, coupled with information from Robert Farrar, who was a personal friend of the soldier’s sisters, gave me what I needed to know.

First Lt. Thomas Clay Carter had been in France since April 1918 and had been made Acting Commander when his Captain was promoted to Major, about 1 October. On 13TH October, at about 5 p.m., his company was in the Argonne Forest. Pvt. Oliver Dennsion wrote: “he was hunting a machine gun position when he was hit by shrapnel and. . . killed instantly. He certainly was a good fellow; he would do anything for you and there was nothing in the world he was afraid of; that was one reason he was killed. He was out there where he really did not have to be.”

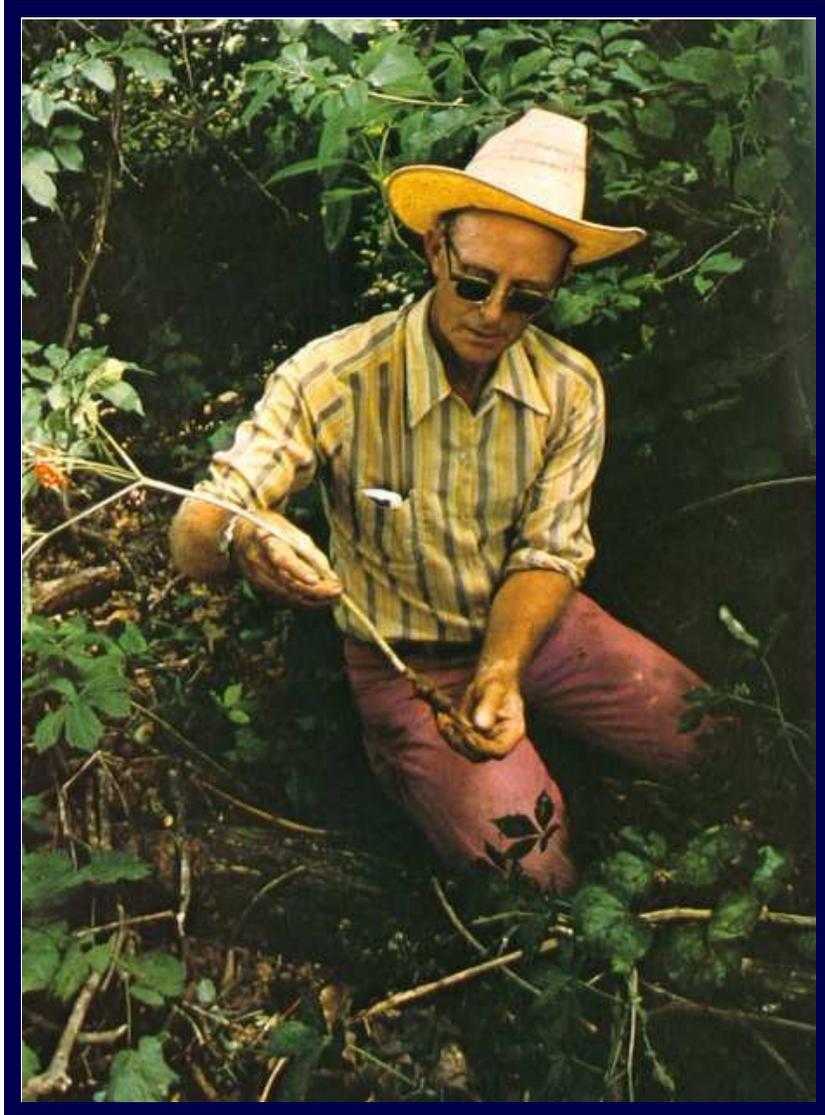
Note: As an advertising slogan I once saw a sign that said: “ We do more than we have to, because we have to.”

E.W.S.

V. FOLKLORE AND RURAL LIFESTYLES



HERBAL MEDICINE



Taped interview: February 18, 1989.

Interviewer: Teresa Diane Gray

Interviewee: Raymond Gressett

Location: Route 1, Box 146

Chunky, MS 39323

D.O.B.: December 11, 1913

Dr. Allen Gressett and his brother, Alvin Gressett, came here about 1850, I'd say -- they might have come before then. I don't know just where they come from, but they was both well educated.

Dr. Alvin owned the Gressett Music House there in Meridian. He owned several other little ol' trading post around there. He sold pianos and organs and all kinds of music instruments. Back when Thomas Edison invented the records, he sold a lot of records for them and [the] Victor Co., too. They come here before they started that.

Dr. Allen Gressett, he was my great-grandpa. He doctored mostly with herbs, but he did have other types [of medicine], too. I've heard Grandma say he used Morphine and some other type of medicine, but he used mostly a lot of different kind of herbs in getting his patients well.

He rode a big black horse, Dr. Allen did. A lot of times the river [the Chunky?] would be up and it would be hard for him to get across to see his patients. He doctored back in the 1800's. using mostly, as I say, herbs. They said when Sherman came through here he doctored some of those men, too, some of the Yankee soldiers. 'Course, they [the Yankees] bogged down over there pretty close to where he lived on Conehatta Creek in Newton County. It wasn't too far from the Lauderdale County line.

Dr. Allen had several children. One was my grandfather, Van Gressett. It might be on the records someplace as J. V. Gressett. He was a farmer and a trader. He had a son named Walter Gressett that was my daddy. My daddy was born in 1886 north of Chunky. Then I was born in Chunky in 1913 -- December 11th, 1913. I live now in what you call the Suquelena area. I've been living here for some 50-odd years. I don't know of anyplace else.

Great-grandpa Gressett practiced in the 1860's and up until he died about 1918. (He died about six miles north of Chunky on the old Gressett place; about all is left there now is a big old silo where my Great-grand-daddy and Grandpa Van Gressett built it, with my daddy, together.) He used every one of the good strong herbs.

Take cucumbers, for instance. He'd grow some of them and keep them different ages and he'd let some of them get yellow. A cucumber that's not yellow and not well ripe hadn't got no advantage to it. You can't make pickles out of it but it's for you instead of against you. He'd let it get ripe and took the juice for your lungs and your kidneys and skin problems. He'd take cucumber salad for chronic constipation. He'd take that juice and put it on old folks that's got bed sores and boils and cure them. It's good for kidney stones and bladder, and for trembles, and it's good for burns. It's also good for a diuretic, like take the water out of your body. It's a great medicine when used right. It's a real good 'un. He'd go for that, all depending what was wrong with you. Cucumber juice is good in cosmetics, too. Makes old ladies look younger.

Another good medicine to get the water out of your body, a diuretic, is red velvet shoemaker [sumac]; or you may use the berries for tea. There's a lot of medicine in them berries; it's good as

a gargle for sore throat. I'm talking about *red velvet*. shoemaker now. Good for fevers, good for kidney problems. It's a dead shot for diarrhea on little babies and children.

It's good for a lot of different things. As I say, it's good to cure the sore mouth. I believe it'll cure strep throat. I even believe, if you make it strong enough, it'll cure the pyorrhea of the gums. I actually believe it would.

Now, there's a lot of different types of shoemaker; I'm not talking about the *purple*. You want to be careful and real sure it's the red velvet and not the purple type, which is black looking, or dark blue. Wait until the leaves is red, too, and you can get your bark when the berries began to turn red velvet and then you can get the bark, too, if you gonna use the bark and leaves. I use the berries most of the time unless I get into a real bad case of the sore mouth, something like strep throat, then I go for the bark. Take bark off the little tree, about a teaspoonful of it into every cup of water and let it steep like I said for about 30 minutes and then cool down, and you're ready. for any kind of sore mouth. I've used it on baby calves when they take the scours. It'll cure that. In fact, it's about as good as white oak bark for that. White oak bark or red oak bark either one will stop the scours in calves. It's also good for hemorrhaging. . . it'll stop internal bleeding in a human being. In case you have somebody hemorrhaging on the inside, you give them a dose of white oak and it will stop. I just thought I'd tell you that while I was talking about red velvet shoemaker

You got other herbs there. Say for sore throat, I'd take golden sill. That's good for a real sore throat. It's good internal or external, gold sill is. It's a good antiseptic and it's a good laxative. It helps relieve palsy and bad pregnancy. A lot of female problems it's good for. You put, always remember, put a teaspoonful of powdered root stock to every full cup of water and you take the powdered root stock then to a pot of hot boiling hot water and let it stand until it's cold and take a teaspoon six time a day.

It's good for external use, too. To extract a golden sill wash for the skin you gotta take it and let it simmer. I've been told it'll cure the dandruff. It's good for ringworm and makes one of the best eye washes in the world. To make a eye wash, mix it with boric acid, one part to one part, and add a pint of boiling water. Mix it with boric acid and it's good for the gums. Once you get it mixed with boric acid you've really got a mouthwash, but you don't have to mix it with boric acid. I use it myself without it. Just take hot water and steam about a half a teaspoonful of it and about, I'd say, about 14 tablespoonful of scalding water and use it like that. It might not keep without you keep it in the refrigerator, but it's one of the best eye washes I've seen.

He was bad to use willow bark, old Doc was. That was his aspirin. I guess you know that's what aspirin is made out of -- a good heavy aspirin is made from willow bark, today. Course, it's a good antiseptic. Willow bark will cure a lot of things on your skin. Both external and internal medicine, too. You steam the stuff, you don't let it boil. (I tell you, don't let no herbs boil; I forgot to tell you that. You take the willow bark and put it in what you think is a cup of water and just sort of simmer it along -- don't let it boil -- for about 25 minutes. Let it cool down and don't mix nothing with it. I just take it like it is, just willow bark and water. I sip along on it until I drink a cupful for the headache or backache. It's also good for arthritis or rheumatism.

You can soak willow bark in cold water, if you want to, from 8 to 10 hours and then strain it. You collect the bark in springtime in the months that have no 'R' in them, like May, June, July and August. That's the four months you are supposed to save willow bark. It's one of the best for

rheumatism, gout, and all types of bursitis and everything else. It'll work for aspirin, is what it'll do.

A lot of times I just use it to rinse my mouth out and clean my teeth. I've got every tooth I ever had. My daddy, he never did have a hollow tooth in his head, like my grandma ahead of him, and I've still got my teeth. We used that for antiseptic mostly, when we don't use what I was talking about a while ago. Lot of times I use that red velvet shoemaker; that's a good antiseptic for your teeth and for your mouth.

And we use what we call ginseng. That's good for near about anything that could be wrong with you internally. It's good for easing childbirth and fever and cough. It's a good laxative for both men and women. I read one time where an old man lived in China who took ginseng almost ever day and drank spring water and lived to be 228 years old. I read that. I don't know how true it is, but I believe it's true. Now that's ginseng!

You got to steep ginseng, too, the same amount, about a teaspoonful of it. On most all herbs, a teaspoonful to a cup of water is what you measure out. With most herbs I generally use about three cups and about three teaspoonsful, but with ginseng I don't use quite that much. It's so expensive. I generally measure me out a cup of water and about half a teaspoonful of ginseng and stir it- up. I'm talking about powdered ginseng now. The fact of the business, it's good for near about all parts of the body. It's good for most everything that could be wrong with you, ginseng is... Am I talking too fast?

Let me tell you about garlic. Garlic is good for your digestive organs, for chronic stomach and intestinal problems. Garlic regulates the action of the liver and gall bladder, and I'll tell you something else it's good for; bronchitis and chronicle typhoid. [Does he mean malaria?] Mix your -garlic with honey and it's good for coughs.

It's good for varicose veins in, our legs or arms, either one, as it helps blood circulation. It's a mighty good herb for lowering the blood pressure, about one of the best there are.

If you take anemia or have intestinal worms in other words, garlic is a good worm medicine. We put it in our dog feed and worm our dogs out with it. It's good for children, too; it'll worm them out.

Garlic is one of the best things in the world. You press the bulb to get your juice out of it if you want to. Lot of folks cooks garlic in their meat and I believe it'll keep the meat from having so much cholesterol in it. Anyway, it'll help you a whole lot.

There's another good root that's good for a lot of things, that's called ginger. You take the root of it and it promotes cleanness of the system. It's good to relieve the effects of unusual substances. You can chew on the rootstock to stimulate the flow of your slobber. Yeah, ginger's good, a good medicine.

You can use a teaspoon of powdered ginger root stock and a teaspoonful of honey and add a cupful of boiling water -- you could add some type of brandy, if you like. I never did. You've got something there that will help you in a lot of ways.

To use ginger powder you have to have something hard -- you can use a mortar to grind it up for powder. I just take a hammer and an old smoothing iron and beat mine up in a rag, beat it to a fine powder. You take it in milk, water or syrup. You can spike it on food with the most common dose being the amount you can pick up on the end of a knife. That's be a good dose.

Another good medicine for sluggish liver is blackberries. A lot of folks don't know you can just eat raw blackberries and it's good for you and it is also good for diarrhea. It's good for babies

and children that's got diarrhea. If you get sluggish in your liver you can just eat blackberry cobbler. You'll just start felling better, seems to me like. I love blackberries and they work on your stomach and make you feel a lot better. It's just like taking some sort of tonic. That's one way to take your medicine and enjoy it. Blackberry juice is mighty good for a lot of stomach problems. I highly recommend blackberries for a lot of stomach ailments.

Then you got your sassafras bark. You gotta get it into a tea, too. Almost boil it, bring it to a steep ... You use the root of it, most do. Just dig it and use the whole root. Wash the root, get the dirt off and you've got a -- oh, I'd use a tablespoonful of -it to every cup of water. You drink a cup a day and it's mighty good to purify your blood. I think it thins your blood, too. Does mine.

You can make a 'cold extract out of different plants. For a cold extract you take two parts of the plant to one pint of water and let it stand eight to twelve hours. Then you strain it through a cheesecloth and you've got a cold extract.

You can make a cold extract out of a lot of different plants. Horehound is one. That's a plant. It looks sort of like -- well, it looks a little bit like comferry [comfrey], which is a mighty good plant, too. You can make a syrup out of this plant. Take three pounds of raw brown sugar and put it in a pint of cold extract and boil it until it reaches the right consistency. You put honey in it. You use about two tablespoonful of honey and that'll help you a whole lot for a cold. You first strain it through a cheesecloth to get the herb out and make it more clear to take. Then you've got you a syrup there.

Then you can go on to a ointment. You can make ointment out of herbs. Get the herb you want to do your healing with. For instance, golden sill would be a good herb to put in an ointment. You mix it well with one part powder and two parts petroleum jelly. There's different ways of mixing it in there and you've got your ointment you can rub on a sore, depending on what herb you're going to use.

To make juice out of plants you take fresh plants or leaves and chop 'em up in small pieces and press or squeeze out the juice. Add a little water in there after you've bruised them, you know, and press them again. It is excellent -- you get the vitamins out of there, and minerals, from the plants. That's another good way to get your medicine, sorta like drinking V-8 juice. Lots of folks drink V-8 juice to get eight types of vegetables. You got comferry (some people call it comfort) and a lotta other herbs and like I say, cut the leaves into small pieces to get the juice and vitamins and minerals out by straining it through a cheesecloth. That's some mighty good doins', to do your plants that way.

I've got comferry growing here on my property. And sassafras, willow bark and red velvet shoemaker I've got that. I've got garlic growing' out there in the garden and we grow cucumbers every year. We have a lot of wild blackberries, we pick them. That's one of the best medicines on the place. Did have a little ginseng when T first moved here, but first one and another come and dug it up, took it off and sold it, I reckon. They 'bout got all my ginseng and I haven't got none. To get that I have to go down in the mall and buy it at a herb place where they sell herbs.

We have grown catnip. We do grow, what do ye call that herb out younder -- spearmint? We grow spearmint. That's another some folks use on their teeth.

I take herbs whenever I need 'em. When I don't need 'em I don't take 'em. I tell you what I done, a long time ago when I first moved here and didn't have no herbs saved up or nothin' like that. I got to where I couldn't hardly get my breath breathing and I went out and got some pine

straw and got some red-hot coals right out of the fireplace. I put that pine straw out there under an old blanket with the heat and got under there and inhaled some of that pine straw steam. It opened my head and my lungs, too. I got to where I could cough that phlegm up and that possibly saved my life. That's been 55 years ago, back in 1937. That was a great experience. There's a lot of medicine out there in the woods if a feller just would stop and think.

I'm gonna stop it there.

CHANGING TIMES, THEN & NOW



Taped Interview: February 26, 1989.

Interviewer: Kenny Kennedy

Interviewee: Glenn Griffin

Location: Elkwood, Miss.

D.O.B.: 1920

Wages have changed a lot since I was growing up. There wasn't no such thing as minimum wage or anything like that, wages were just whatever they wanted to pay you. Like when I got my Social Security card in 1940. I got it and walked three miles and worked all day hauling logs and walked three miles back home for \$1.50 a day. One of the first jobs I ever had working by the hour was for the state highway department for 22 cents a hour shoveling dirt and cutting right of ways, whatever had to be done. That was ten hours a day, six days a week. And there was no break time. In that ten hours we got thirty minutes for lunch, the only break we got. It was hard work and they didn't have no mercy on us. They didn't give us nothing. It was all work and very little pay, then.

But also, the prices you had to pay for things was quite a bit different then. I can remember the old T-Model when I first started riding around and fooling around with cars. At that time you could get gas for fifteen cents a gallon and you could run a week on five gallons of gas. I drove the T-Model some, but mostly when I started driving it was a Model A, a 1929 Model A was what I drove more than anything else along then.

When I started driving it I chauffeured for my granddaddy, driving from here to Meridian and everywhere else. I wasn't but twelve years old. You didn't you have to have no driver's license then. You just drove. Of course, there wasn't very many vehicles on the road. When you first started having to get a driver's license in Mississippi you didn't have to take a test or nothing, you just went to the Sheriff's Office and told them you wanted a driver's license and they'd write you out some. I don't remember whether it was 25 cents or 50 cents they'd cost. But there was no examination, no driver's test or nothing.

But it's quite a bit different now. You've got to study and take a written exam and driver's test by the highway patrol and even the license costs quite a bit now. You have to pass a lot of tests, and that's good.

We were talking about prices that you could buy things for. When I was just ten or twelve years old I could go to the Saturday afternoon matinee and see a double-feature movie for eleven cents, and get a bag of popcorn for a nickel and a Coke for a nickel. All that together wouldn't be but nineteen cents, or twenty-one cents, and now it cost \$7.00 or \$8.00 to do the same thing.

I have worked for other people when I was along that age and plowed all day for fifty cents. But you could take that money and buy something with it. There was no such thing as Wage and Hour then and there was no such thing as a normal, ordinary day's work because it was from daylight to dark, or from sunup to sundown. That was considered a day then, not eight hours. If it was in the summertime from sunup till sundown, it was more like 12 to 14 hours. It was real hard work and not much pay but even then, the fact that we didn't know any better and didn't have no better, we enjoyed it and didn't mind it, but I'd hate to have to go back to it now. I don't know, people talk about "the good old days"; if that was the good old days, I don't want no more of them, not working for them kind of wages. We've come a long way since then. It just

don't seem possible that people are working for the kind of wages now that they are. I don't believe nobody is worth \$20 and \$25 an hour. Some of them is getting that now.

When I started out doing sheet metal work, commercial sheet metal work, it was for very little pay, and now, for that same work, you are talking about \$15 or \$20 an hour. Then if you made \$15 or \$20 for a whole payday, it was good. Back when I was working for 22 cents and hour, I'd work a whole two weeks for less, a little less, than what you'd make now for one 8-hour day, minimum wage, now. And I'd work two weeks and wouldn't get that much. Hard work, too.

Yesterday I was telling the kids, the younger people, that I'd do more work in the morning before leaving for school than most of them do in a week. I don't think I ever convinced my children that was true. But we were raised up on the farm and we had to work and make everything we got.

You couldn't buy stuff like you can now, and you didn't have the money to buy it with. We'd have to work and make everything we got. I'd get up every morning, after I got big enough - 'course I was at the age in between where I caught all of it. My brothers and sisters were older than me and I had others so much younger than me that for several years I was caught right in the middle. I'd have to get up in the morning at 4:00 o'clock and build a fire in the fireplace and build one in the stove, and then, while my mother was cooking breakfast, I'd have to go get the calves up out of the pasture, feed the cows and milk. We averaged 2 milk cows, sometimes more, and I'd have to do all of that before breakfast.

After breakfast I'd have to do all the rest of the work -- getting the cows and calves out to pasture, feeding the hogs and chickens, drawing enough water for my mother to use that day, and be sure there was enough wood for her because we didn't have any electric lights then, nor no screens on the windows. We didn't have a bathroom inside. We didn't have any running water. What water we got was drawn out of a well with a bucket and a rope. To wash clothes and everything else. The days that my mother washed, either the evening before or the next morning before I went to school, I'd have to draw three or four tubs full of water for her to wash.

Back then there was no question, because of the discipline, there was no question about what we had to do when we got in from school. We knew what we had to do and nobody met us at the door and told us, you got to do this, you got to do that. We knew what we had to do. When dark come, it just better be done. There was no question about it. And now, when children are raised up in town, there is nothing to do except watch television and a few chores, but not many, and I hate to say it but the discipline in most of the homes and all the schools and everywhere you go, even in the armed services, there is no discipline there. So, people talking about prayer going out of the school along with discipline and all that, and how come it to go out of the school, they should know that it went out of the home first. Most of it.

We had to work hard and we had to help ourselves, but now, living in town with just a house and yard, there's not a lot to do. Most of the children, not all of them, but most of the children think it's a crime that they have to take a brand new lawnmower and cut a little grass. That part of living is just so much different. Now people have grass on their yards and fertiliz' it and water it, just to get to cut it. Back when I was growing up, they wouldn't let a sprig of grass grow in the yard. We had to keep every bit of grass hoed out and the yard swept with a broom. There wasn't no such thing as a grassy yard then. We had to make our own brush-broom out of dogwood sprouts to sweep it with. We'd cut them out of the woods and tie them together and they made a good brush broom. And one of them seasoned dogwood sprouts made about the best

persuader you ever saw... [laughter] They wouldn't wear out. You could just keep on whooping [whipping] and it wouldn't wear out. It's just so much different now to what it was then there's just no way to compare it because people did what they had to do. Then we had to do it. We had to work and had to make everything that we had and now we don't. It's just a matter of what you have to do.

Even when we went to church. Back then there was no question about whether we was going to church. Every time the doors opened, whatever they had at church, whether it was prayer meeting or preaching or revival or singing convention or whatever, there was no question that we was going. Not never "do you want to go?", but we'd just go. Daddy was a teacher and leader in gospel singing and he led in about every revival in the whole community, whatever kind of church it was. There was no question but what we went every time he did. I mean, there was just no question about it. I don't care how tired we got of going to church, that didn't make no difference, we went anyhow. Not only that, but we went in and sat down and took a part and behaved ourselves. Because that's the way we was taught and we knew what we'd get if we didn't. It wasn't a lot of hollering and whooping, they didn't holler at us and threaten or promise and beg and all, they just told us one time what to do. That was all. The next, it would either be a switch or a straight razor strap. He had a one of these wide straps, wide straps that you sharpen straight razors on, and my mother was a genius with that and she would whoop till you cried, you just might as well go ahead and cry 'cause she was going to whoop till you cried and then whoop till you hushed. There's a lot of difference in that kind of whooping now and then. Now people whoop their children just enough to make them mad. They don't never get their attention, just enough to make them mad. Most of them.

We used to have family gatherings of all kinds. People lived then as families, and families helped families. One family could be in trouble in the community and everybody would gather in and help them. Whatever the problem was. If a barn burned, everybody would pitch in and build them a new barn. If somebody in the neighborhood had quite a bit of sickness, the people would gather in and work his complete crop. Just work it out for him. There wasn't many baseball games back then to go to, but we had a lot of singing conventions and church work, all that kind of stuff and we would all go and take a part in that, and have a ball just being together.

We all went as a family. Everything was a family deal, all the way through. Sometimes eight or ten of us boys and girls would get together and go out on the creek or river on Friday evening and camp out and fish, camp out all night. We'd eat whatever we could catch and cook it the best way we could, and that was a lot of fun. But we didn't get to do as much of that as people do now because people had to work. I thought all them years and really felt bad at my mother 'cause I was like everybody else, I wanted to go to all the ball games and on all the fishing trips, and picture shows and everything else, but my mother was a professional, a real genius at keeping boys busy. We would ask her if we could go fishing and she'd say, "Yes, you can go after you do this, and this". By the time you did all that, it was too late to go. I wondered all them years, some of these things that we had to do made just about as much sense as digging a hole and then turning around and filling it up. After I got bigger, older, I could see why she was doing that. The importance of it was that she was keeping us busy and keeping us out of trouble. She kept us busy so she knew what we was doing and she was going to know what we was doing and where we was, too.

It's odd and funny to think about it now, compared to what it was then, because then you saw very few women ever wearing slacks. They wore dresses and they had better be below the knee. It was outrageous to them old women if a girl had a dress on that you could see her knee. They thought that was unbelievable. Girls weren't allowed to wear shorts. If they wore shorts at all around the house, they had better come down around their knees. Bikinis and skimpy swim suits like they got now, they didn't even exist then. Nobody even knew what they was. People would put on a decent bathing suit to go swimming then, or most of the time, just clothes, put on clothes to go swimming in the creeks. Today people would laugh their heads off to see what people wore swimming then. Sure wasn't naked, I guarantee you that.

Women didn't go to the beauty shops then like they do now. Most of them wore long hair, or shoulder length or whatever, but they didn't go to the beauty shop every week. They'd fix their own or they'd fix each other's hair and they'd look nice. That's the way it was then, there wasn't no such thing as beauty shops like there is now. There were some, but not like it is now. Then a man could go to the barber shop and get a haircut for a quarter. Back then, women dressed like women and men dressed like men. There wasn't no trouble to tell the difference because boys didn't wear long hair and girls didn't wear short hair like they have now.

I got tickled when I was working at the Dixie Station here a few years ago. It happened to me twice when I walked up behind a car to wait on it and asked, "Can I help you, ma'am?" In both cases they told me "Yeah," and in both cases they had a mustache! [laughter] From behind they looked like a woman! You didn't see nothing like that back then. Now I won't say everybody got a haircut as regular as they ought to, but when they did, they got a haircut. I never could wear hair longer than I was supposed to. My boy did it, but I never did agree with it, or like it, but times have changed. People do that now. I think if you need a haircut, then get a haircut!

There wasn't as many colors for men to wear back then, and the clothes weren't nearly as good. The style was plain, plain-built clothes of ordinary colors, not white or red or whatever now. There weren't no mixed colors or nothing like that. For dress, men wore white shirts more than they did anything else. Working people wore overalls more than they did anything else 'cause then they were cheaper. And they lasted longer. Now overalls is so high you can't afford to buy them. But the colors, style and all of that, it just wasn't as good as now. There wasn't no such a thing back then as slim-cut and tailor-fit, it was just made. Either it fit you or it didn't.

When I first started to school there was no such thing as school busses. However far you were from school, you walked. That was the only way to get there. When I got up to ten or twelve years old, they consolidated three country schools and they happened to consolidate the school I was going to, so the people from the other schools, which we are talking about several miles away, they could haul them by school bus there. Up till then, they wasn't no such thing in that country as a school bus. I remember when I first started to school I walked as much as three miles and over to school every day. Regardless of the weather, raining, ground frozen, or whatever. There was no such thing as not coming to school because of the weather.

Back then we went barefoot more than we wore shoes. We had shoes, not plentiful, but we had them. We just wore them when we had to. Our feet would get so tough we wouldn't need no shoes, going barefoot all the time. I just had to walk a mile to school when I was going to grade school.

When I started high school at Quitman, it was four miles from where I lived to school. I played basketball for three games a week, Tuesday, Friday and Saturday night. On Monday,

Wednesday and Thursday we'd have practice. The three days I practiced there was very few cars on the road and we'd practice till night. I'd take a shower right quick and then, most of the time I had to walk home, four miles. At least, I'd jog home, it'd be too cold to walk. I was tough then, and young, and in good shape. It didn't hurt me to run. I could jog mile after mile, but that's what I had to do. We played three games a week and practiced three evenings a week, and then I had to do all my chores when I got home however late it was when I got there. I had certain things I had to do and there was no excuse, playing ball or whatever, that was no excuse. Sometimes I could hitch with my daddy coming home if he was coming that way, I could catch him home in the evenings, but most of the time I had to walk and do my work when I got there.

Now people think it's a crime if they have to walk three or four blocks home. People are looking for excuses now. Parents let their kids out-talk them, but that's the difference between then and now. There was no out-talking then, you just had to do it. But I enjoyed it. I don't know whether I'd want to do it again or not, but I enjoyed every bit of it then.

The school year didn't last but eight months, and living on the farm, I missed about a month of that in the spring to help plant the crops. In the fall I missed about another month helping get the crop in, so I had to learn all I could in that six months, because when you're not there, you just missed it. Some teachers would let you make it up and some wouldn't. I never did make great grades because I acted stupid, in a way, because I went to school to play ball and not to learn. [laughter] I can see now how stupid it was, but it's funny how when you're young, parents and your friends that's older than you that's already been through that and tried it and know it won't work, will tell you, but you don't believe it. You've got to find out for yourself. That's been going over and over ever since I can remember and right now, my children won't believe me when, I tell them it won't work. Even when I've already tried it and know it, but they've got to find out for themselves. It don't take them long to find out, but I just wish that children wouldn't be as stupid and stubborn as we were when we were growing up, and listen to their parents. The older you get, the smarter you find out your parents were. It's just when you are young and foolish and stubborn and bull-headed that you think your parents are stupid. Some boys and girls rebel and think their parents are picking on them and they leave home. Out on their own, they are at the mercy of everybody and have to take a lot of hard knocks. There's nothing that can take the place of a good Christian home where the parents are not too tight on you, because on down the line, it'll pay off. In broken homes where parents just don't seem to care one way or another about what their children do, nor where they go, nor when they come back, the children suffer the consequences. It's just not right.

Most of the time back then a man was the only bread-winner in the family and he was the head of the house. No question about it. Everybody in the family worked, but the man did most of the public work. Some women worked, but it was mostly the men because the wife had a big enough job to do taking care of the house, the laundry, the children, all of that, and all of it was done by hand. There was no push-button living then, it was all by hand.

Like doing the laundry. They'd get out and put the dirty clothes in a pot and boil them, beat them with a stick, and scrub them on a rub board and rinse them and then they had to mix up their starch themselves, and then iron each piece of clothing. There was no such thing as permanent press, it all had to be ironed, work clothes, or whatever. Of course the children, depending on their age and sex, took a role in helping with that. I was lucky, I had a mother and three sisters and I never did have to do no housework. All of my work was outside. Some of the boys had to help

with housework. I did; I had to learn how after I got married. My wife got down sick and I didn't know nothing, but I had to do it. It'd be better to learn as you go, when you are younger.

Seemed the discipline part mostly fell to the woman because the man had either gone to public work or was working in the fields. The mother was with the children all the time so she got to do most of the whooping. My daddy didn't have to whoop us, he just had to look at us kind of hard and it would just scare us to death. My mother could whoop on us all day and it didn't bother us, but he could just look at us like he didn't like it and it would just tear us up.

Women just didn't work like they do now, they didn't try to take a man's place then. But it's as much the man's fault as it is the woman's because women's been pushing all these years to try to do that. And the men kindly backed off and let them. Even in the churches, back then, the men done the tending to the business and everything there was to do publicly in the church. Women didn't have a very big part in that. Nowadays, boys not only have to contend with the rest of the man and boys for jobs out there, they have to compete with all the women, too. It's just pitiful, sometimes.

I've worked on federal jobs where I was the only bread winner the house and they had to cut back the force and lay off a bunch on men, and I've been laid off. I would be the only bread-winner in the house where there would be as many as three and four people from the same family working on the base. I never could understand that, how they could do that. Women didn't play nothing like the leadership role than that they do now. The men acted like men and took their role and their part serious and they done it, the women didn't have to. Over the years, men have just backed off and backed off and the women's advanced so now that the jobs are just up for grabs.

We didn't have to worry about drugs fifty years ago when I was growing up. Of course, there's always been alcohol around, and a few went along with that. Anywhere I've been, there was a few that would use it to excess and get drunk, but it wasn't a common thing. Most people didn't. Didn't fool with it at all. As far as drugs were concerned, we didn't even know what drugs was, we never heard about it. Nobody took any drugs that I ever seen in my life till not too awful many years ago. I'm 69 years old and I don't even know what dope looks like. If I saw it I wouldn't know it because I've never dealt with it, never been around it, never had no dealings with it no way. What it looks like, smells like, or tastes like, or what, I don't know. That was just non-existent when I grew up. If it had been available and I had experimented with it, I'd hate to think what the seat of my breeches would have looked like when my mother and daddy got through with me. Everything then was either right or wrong.

Young people didn't have as much privilege then as they do now. Most of them. I guess they's exceptions everywhere. But there was discipline at home and there was no such thing as going to a party and staying out all night. We had a certain time to be home and there was no excuse for us not being home at that time, either. There wasn't a lot of hollering and sand-raising going on, they just told you what time to be home, and if you wasn't, you got what was coming to you, either by switch or a razor strap. I remember most of the whoopings I ever got because they weren't no love taps, it was put there in quantity and quality. I hate to admit it because I'm a parent, but it all goes back to home training, home teaching and home discipline.

I found it to be true when I was raising my children; don't promise them something that you can't deliver, whatever age we are talking about. If it's a Cadillac, give him a Cadillac. If you promise a whooping if he does a thing, give him that whooping in a way he'll remember it. If you don't keep the promises you make to them, how do you expect them to keep their promises to you.

It works both ways. You got to live up to your promises, so you need to be careful and not promise something you can't deliver. [Tape ended.]

FARM LIFE IN THE 1930's



Taped interview: February 28, 1989.
Interviewer: Karen Tew
Interviewee: Mrs. Lauraine Tew
Location: Route 5, Box 249
Union, Miss.
D.O.B.: August 1, 1928

I was raised on a farm in a small community called Dixon in Neshoba County, Mississippi. The nearest town was Philadelphia, which had nearly the same things then as it does now, except it was not as modern. The necessities we bought there were basically the same as they are now.

We lived in a four-room frame house. It was very open, with cracks in the floor and walls. It had a fireplace for heat, only one fireplace, but we used the wood cook-stove in the kitchen for heat, too.

One large bedroom had two double beds in it, but a larger room where the fireplace was, was where people sat. It had two beds in it but no couches, only wooden chairs. Us smaller children sat on the floor around the fire. Then we had another bedroom off the front porch. You had to go out onto the porch to enter that room, which made it kind of bad on a cold night.

We ate in our huge kitchen. At one end we had a long table with a bench on one side and chairs around the rest. At the other end of the room was a wood stove where we cooked. We had no cabinets, and we had a table we called a cook table where Mother mixed the food she was going to cook. We had a back porch where we kept a water bucket and an enameled wash pan where we washed our hands. It was very crude, not nice like we have today.

The house was not warm. In the winter we had so many quilts on the bed that we could hardly turn over because they were so heavy. Before we went to bed, Mother would heat the smoothing irons, or a brick if she could find one, and wrap it in towels to put next to our feet in bed so the sheets wouldn't be so cold. I remember once she made a thing like a cover over a covered wagon and put it over the bedposts to cover our bed to keep out the drafts. That helped a lot. We had feather beds we would bury down in, and there would be more than one person in the bed at a time. Sometimes there would be three or four. Two would sleep at one end and two at the other, with our feet together in the middle. In the winter, the more we had in bed with us, the warmer we stayed.

There was no keeping cool in the summertime. We'd fan and perspire. We would sit out on the porch because the house, the kitchen, would get so hot from cooking on the wood stove. Well, you couldn't stay in the kitchen, hardly. We'd raise the windows, but there was no fan, no air conditioners. We just had to do the best we could.

I had four brothers and two sisters. Well, I had one sister that died when she was eight days old, but there were six of us that survived. We had it hard, but we had a lot of fun. Where there is more to play with, seems like, there is more to fuss about, but we didn't do as much fussing as we did playing, because we were not allowed to fuss. If we did, we had to go and do chores. We had to bring in stove wood and stack stove wood or things like that if we got in a fuss, so we were very careful not to do that. We were a close family. We did things together.

The hard part was we didn't have enough clothes like people do today. We had enough to keep us warm, but we wore the same things over again because we couldn't afford anything better. But, there were good things as well as hard times that came from having a large family.

We farmed, and cotton was our main crop. Of course, we raised corn, peanuts, peas. Most anything. Watermelons, sugar cane. Just everything we could think of to raise. Raising cotton to sell was the way we got money, though we also got some egg money from the chickens to buy necessities. That helped. We would sell peanuts, and we raised corn for our own cornmeal. We would shell it and take it to the mill to be ground so we could make our cornbread. We had our own milk from our cows.

We raised most everything we ate. We raised our chickens to eat, we raised our hogs for pork. Everybody would go together and kill a beef around the fourth of July. We'd can part of it, and neighbors would take some. They'd all get together for that.

We made our own molasses syrup and corn meal. We'd pick dry peas in the fall, and butterbeans, to eat in the winter. We raised sweet potatoes to bake and eat in the winter. Daddy dug a storm shelter where Mother would store turnips and rutabagas, covered with pine straw, so we would have something to eat besides dry peas and beans. Daddy grafted a lot of fruit trees so we had figs, apples, pears, peaches, plums -- most any kind of fruit.

We didn't have any toys so we made our own. We loved to play bottle-cars in the sand. We usually used, if we could find them, snuff bottles for our cars.

My father raised bees and we'd steal beeswax, the honey comb, from his hives and chew it to make beeswax. We'd wax old barrel staves and climbed a near-by hill with a ditch, carefully filled with pine straw, at the bottom. We'd stand on our waxed staves to glide down the hill like people skiing. If you weren't a good skier, or whatever you want to call it, you'd hit a tree, so we'd try to pick a place where trees weren't too close.

An old iron well-pulley wheel, or a tireless wheel from a worn out wheelbarrow, would be a good find, as everybody needed a good iron wheel. We would bend a Prince Albert tobacco can into a 'U' shape, tack it to a stick, and then get our wheel to rolling. After setting our wheels in motion, we would push them along with our tobacco cans to see who could get down the road the fastest and the furthest. They made a most satisfying sound when we crossed a portion of road that had been graveled.

We didn't have a ball like we have today, so we made our own. We never threw a piece of twine away but would save it, wrap it and sew it, wrap it and sew it, to be used for a baseball. Then we put up a little ole iron hoop on the side of the barn to throw our ball through to play basketball. If it hit the ground it wouldn't bounce so somebody had to catch it before it hit.

There was an old junk car in front of the house, just a piece of a car, and we pretended we could drive it. We would make a playhouse and send the man of the house off to town in the "car" to buy something. We would cook their dinner in our playhouse and have it done before he got back from town. We just made up our games as we went along.

We used to have little parties, or "socials", in our neighborhood. We'd play "Spin the Bottle" where we all gathered around the edge of the room. First one and then another took turns at spinning the bottle in the center of the circle. If a girl spun the bottle and the neck pointed to a boy, they would take a little walk together. If a boy spun it, the girl it pointed to had to take a walk with him. We had a game we called "Post Office" that was kind of the same, but it was more thrilling because if you were named, you had to kiss the boy that caught you. All those things. We just made up our own games to play back then, but it was a lot of fun.

We got our first bicycle one Christmas. Daddy didn't get one for everybody because he couldn't, but he got one for the family so we had to take turns riding it. He put a block of wood in

the front yard where the smaller kids could pull the bike up to get on. When it came my turn I was so tickled that I could hold the bike up and make it roll that I watched my pedaling feet instead of where I was going. A lot of our cousins and the rest of my family were sitting on the edge of the porch, and I, still watching my feet, headed straight for them, hollering "Watch me, Daddy, watch me!" Well, they scattered out of my way and I got the most of it. I was thrown all the way onto the porch, but I wasn't hurt much. I was just glad it didn't hurt the bike. All through the years they've laughed and teased me, saying, "Watch me, Daddy, watch me!" It was so funny! We took turns and all learned to ride. For a wonder, we didn't fuss over the bike. If one wanted to ride a while, the other gave over and let him take a turn.

Christmas was a lot of fun at our house, even if we didn't get many toys. The girls would get a tiny doll, or a rubber ball and jacks. We each got an apple and orange, and some stick candy, a box of raisins, orange slices candy, and some nuts. But we looked forward to that, it was so much fun. Mother made twelve or fifteen cakes. She made chicken dressin' in big pans, and we had company all over the place with everybody eating, just a big get together.

On Christmas night we couldn't wait for Santy Claus to come. We wouldn't be sleepy, and we'd hear one of them say, "Shhh! I hear something!", and boy, us kids would hit the bed! We couldn't go to sleep so Mother and Daddy had to stay up late to put our Christmas out. Daddy was a blacksmith, and he made a little iron thing that made deer tracks. He always got out in the front yard and dragged a thing like sleigh runners going across and put these little deer tracks in it. If it had rained he had to make them deeper. The first thing we did, after we saw what Santy Claus had brought us, was to run see the deer tracks as they went through the yard. We would ask our daddy why the tracks stopped at a certain place.

He'd say, "Well, the gate out front, they didn't go through it. This is where they raised, the reindeer raised and went up in the air to go off to visit someone else."

It was always a joyous time. We never fussed about what we got. We were always proud of what we got because Christmas time's the only time we ever got any extras. Our family couldn't afford to take us to the store like they do today. We didn't ask for more because we knew they couldn't afford it.

Did I tell you about staying in a haunted house? Well, the history of this house was that a long time ago, some men were watching some girls dressing through a window. They were killed and thrown in a well and covered up, so that's where the house got its name. My grandfather used to live in this house, and my mother told us that they could be sitting around the fireplace, and they would hear a sound like peas rolling about in the attic. They'd get up to look, but they couldn't find anything there. Sometimes they heard a sound like a bucket lid falling. The sound would roll to the door, and that would be it. Sometimes they would hear murmurings coming from outside the house. Not all the time, but periodically.

I was spending the night in this house with some friends one night years later. The old house had a bedroom at end of the house, so there was a fireplace in the room where we were to sleep. Our door wouldn't stay shut, so we laid a block of wood against it. My sister and her friend were sleeping on the bed, but her two sisters and me were sleeping on the floor. After a while our stick of wood slid back and the door came open. And this white cat came through, and it.....

[At this point the tape broke. I have spliced it back together as well as an amateur might do, but I had to cut off the damaged portion of the tape, and a small amount of conversation was lost. Sorry. - Sallie M. Smith, Tape Transcriber.]

..... was no cat. It just looked like a cat. We started screaming and the cat went through to the other room where the man and woman were sitting up, and she kicked at the cat, and her foot went right through it. All five of us girls slept in this one bed that night and next morning these people got up and hunted them a new place to live, moved that very day. They already had their crop started and they'd go back to tend their farm, but they'd go back to the other house to sleep at night. I don't know of anyone else that has spent the night in that house since. I will go there in daytime, I've never seen nor heard anything unusual in the daytime. But I will not go there at night.

Did I tell you how we made pull candy? We made pull candy from syrup. Sugar cane syrup. We would add vanilla flavoring and boil the syrup until it formed a hard ball in a glass of cold water. Then we'd take it off the heat and let it cool until we could hold it in our hands without being burned, and then we'd grease our hands with butter and start pulling it. We'd pull it between one hand and the other, stretching it out so far, and then fold it back and pull it out again. We'd pull it and fold it, repeating this until it got to the consistency we wanted, and turned a light golden brown, a pretty color. Then we would kind of twist these pulls. It gets to be taffy-like when it cools, like salt water taffy, kind of. We didn't have wax paper then, but we would put butter on a platter, or put it on butter smeared over the oil-tablecloth on the cook table. When it got real hard, you could take a knife, tap it, and it would break apart. If it was damp weather we didn't make it because the candy would kind of melt and stay sticky. We'd make it on pretty days and it would keep for days like peanut brittle.

We always had plenty butter. After we milked the cows, when the cream came to the top of the milk, we would take it off with a spoon. That was called skimming the milk. We would put it in a churn to keep until the cream began to sour -- we said it had 'turned', back then. The milk had to be a certain temperature -- it had to be warm to turn. In the winter we set the churn near the fireplace till the milk turned. If it wasn't warm enough, we'd add warm water to it. When it turned, we put the dasher through the hole in the churn lid, and then we'd sit down and churn. We'd pull the dasher up and down, up and down, until butter formed from the cream.

When the butter rose to the top and became real hard and firm, Mother dipped the butter off. She used a butter-paddle, a small wooden paddle made from cedar, to work the butter. She would stick the paddle in it, and turn it over and over, just like kneading dough for rolls, only she used a paddle. She turned the butter over until she had worked all the milk out of it, and it got real hard. If she wanted to put it in a butter mold, she would, and mold it into little blocks. If she didn't, she just took her little paddle and smoothed it over onto a butter dish. She could smooth it like it was in a mold because she had done it so many years. We didn't have refrigerators. A truck came through our community once a week, delivering ice, and we would get a block if we had the money. We would place it in a tub, all wrapped up in an old quilt, and put sawdust around it to keep it from melting so fast. In later years my father bought an icebox. Then we would wrap the block of ice in an old quilt and put it in the ice box. Then we would set our butter and milk down in one end of the ice box to keep our butter firm and our milk cold.

Before we had an ice box, we kept our sweet milk from souring by setting it in the spring where we got our water. It was real cool water, but if a rain came up and it looked like it was going to rain a lot, we'd run down to get the milk coolers out to keep them from being washed away. We skimmed the milk to drink for supper, saving the cream that had come up for butter. It would take a couple of days from the time it was milked until the milk and cream were ready to churn. The amount of time spent on churning depended. You just churned till butter came. Mother made biscuits every morning for us to eat with butter and syrup.

We raised sugar cane to make our syrup. Molasses. In the fall we would go to the cane patch to strip the cane, strip the fodder off and haul the stalks to the mill. Earlier in the summer we would have gone to the woods to cut wood for the cane mill. You know, to make the syrup. We hauled the wood to the mill to cook the syrup.

A fire was started in the firebox under the big pan where the cane juice would be cooked. Horses would be hitched to a long pole and made to walk around and around to turn the wheels that ground the juice from the stalks of cane. One person would poke the ends of the stalks between the wheels that mash out the juice. It ran down a pipe into a barrel which strained it. Then it ran down another pipe into the pan that had the fire under it. The cooking pan had several little compartments to it, and as the syrup got done, it would run to the end away from the fire. There was always fresh juice coming in one end, and cooked syrup running out the other. The hot syrup was caught in another barrel with a strainer on it to take out the foam. Then the finished syrup was sealed with a lid in gallon molasses buckets, and allowed to cool.

We also made lye soap to wash our clothes. We took grease, old used grease from frying bacon and meat and things. Lard, we called it. We used a can of "Red Devil" lye, and ashes from the fireplace or stove. We put all this in the wash pot outside and boiled it. After it got to a certain stage, cool water was added and the soap would come to the top and all of the other settled down to the bottom. Then the soap could be dipped out and placed in pans to harden. When it got hard we cut it up into bars, and that's what we used for all our washing.

We didn't have running water so we washed our clothes in our wash pot down at the spring. We'd go down, build a fire around the wash pot and heat the water, and we'd wash our clothes out first in a washtub. Next we'd put them in the pot and boiled them. Then we fished them out of the boiling water with a thing we called a battling [battening?] board, a big stick worn smooth from many wash days. The clothes were placed in a washtub of rinse water, and then rinsed again in a second tub of rinse water. The men's work overalls and pants would be so dirty from farming that they'd be taken from the pot, laid across a block of wood, and beat with the battling board before they were rinsed. We had a rub board, but if you rubbed all this on a rub board, the skin would be rubbed from your hands. So for work clothes we just boiled and beat them, then rinsed them and dried them. We dried all our clothes by hanging them across a nearby barbed wire fence.

When the clothes got dry we would build a fire in the stove and set smoothing irons on there to get hot so we could press the clothes out. We didn't have ironing boards, but used an old quilt folded across the end of the dining table for padding. In the summertime when it was so hot we'd build a fire in the yard and set the irons against it. Of course, they'd get smoked and we had to roll them in the sand to get the black off before we could use them on our clothes. We made our starch, made it out of flour and water. We'd mix flour in cold water and set it on the stove and let come to a boil. When you set it off the stove, you added cold water to in and then dipped your

clothes in it. Back then, we wore our clothes real stiff, not like they are today. When we ironed a pair of pants, we could stand them on the floor.

Using tiny scraps of cloth, Mother pieced all our quilts. It took so many for our big family that she'd sit up at night, or on rainy days, to piece our colorful quilts. After we got through picking cotton in the fall we'd go again to pick what we called scrap cotton, the last little bit that had been left behind. Daddy would take it to the cotton gin to have the seeds taken out, and brought it back in sacks. Then Mother would sit by the fireplace after supper and card her cotton.

A cotton card was a thin wooden board with a handle. About four to five inches wide and about eight to ten inches long, it had short little teeth like a hair brush all over one side where you put a handful of cotton to card it. Using two cards, Mother would pull one card one way and the other card the other, to pack the cotton between the little teeth to form a small cotton batting. When the card was full, she would grasp the edge of the small cotton batting to take it out. It would be about four by eight inches in size. She would stack the batting beside her until she had made enough for a quilt.

Our quilting frame hung from the ceiling when not in use. To work on a quilt, the frame was lowered to about table height so one could sit around the edges to quilt. First Mother would lower the frame to put in the lining, the quilt back, and then she'd spread her cotton batting over it. If she didn't have enough cotton padding, she would raise the frames back to the ceiling and card some more until she had enough for the whole quilt. At last she'd place her pieced quilt-top on, and we'd all sit around and quilt.

It was hard for women back then because they had their children at home with a mid-wife. At the first sign of labor, they would send for the "granny woman." They didn't have medication to ease pain. If the midwife saw that there was going to be trouble, she'd send someone for the doctor. He usually came on horseback, or by buggy, and he might get there in time to deliver the baby. Mother had all her children but one without a doctor. He had nothing to take for pain. Sometimes infants survived, sometimes they didn't. Sometimes it was the mothers that didn't survive. Doctors made house calls but if one of us got sick, unless it was critical, we didn't call a doctor. We were lucky because it was only three to four miles to the doctor's office and one of the boys could get on a horse to go get him. If he wasn't there he would leave a message and Doc would come when he could. Sometimes if you were sick your parents would take you in the wagon, but you didn't go if you just got cut. Unless it was a matter of life or death, our parents just doctored the family in their own way.

The medicines they used, the old remedies, were the ones they had been taught. Like if you had a sprained ankle, they got red clay and mixed it with vinegar to make a cast to put around your ankle. It got hard when it dried out. The vinegar would draw the soreness out, and the cast kept you from moving your ankle.

We would try to keep aspirin, but sometimes we'd give out. That was about the only pain reliever we had in those days. I've heard that some people made their own aspirin from willow trees. I know if you had an earache, Mother would put some drops in, and she put corn meal in a skillet to heat it real good. She'd put it in a bag and then wrap it again to keep the little meal from coming out, and put that over your ear like we use a hot water bottle to keep heat on things. And every spring everybody had to a laxative. Usually Black Draught. That was one of the things they said would make you feel better in the spring.

I know pine rosin was used if you had an infected place from a thorn or a nail or something in your foot. The first thing you did was soak it in kerosene, and then you would go hunt a pine tree with a certain kind of rosin. Put a plaster of that on the hurt place and it would pull the infection out.

If you had a toothache and a tooth had to be pulled, your father took a pair of wire pliers and yanked it out. You didn't go to the dentist unless it was real bad. We weren't sick too much and we had good times, too.

We would get in the wagon and go to a big creek several miles from our house. Several families would go to camp out and fish. At night all the children played by the campfire and had a big time. We would cook our own meals. There was no such thing as taking along a loaf of bread -- they would fry cornbread in a skillet on the fire. That and fried fish would make a meal. They would wake us all in the mornings with pancakes and syrup, and fried meat, and coffee made in a bucket over the fire. We didn't have paper plates, but each brought their own dishes to eat from. We'd wash our dishes down in the creek and pack them up to carry them home. It was a lot of fun, one of our entertainments.

Going to church was fun, too. The closest church was about four to five miles from our house. Children wouldn't do it today, but we would get up on Sunday mornings and walk to church. We'd have our Sunday School and preaching, and then we'd walk back. Sometimes we would put the horses to the wagon, get in the wagon to ride to church and back. The horses would be slow walking along. We children would pull our shoes off because we, didn't want to get them dirty. We would run ahead of the wagon, or we would stop and look at something along the road. And then the wagon would have gone off and left us, and we'd have to run fast to catch it. We'd hang our feet out the rear of the wagon and they'd get dirty, but Mother always carried a wet rag and, just before we got to church, she would clean us up again so we could put on our shoes back on to go into church.

There were no gravel roads back then. When it rained our red-clay roads often became impassable. Mr. Ollie Nicholson drove our school bus, an old truck with a homemade body on it, with homemade benches running lengthwise of the body. We'd start to school, but many times the bus would stall going up the slick clay hills. Mr. Nicholson would put the bigger boys out to push to help the bus up the hill. When he wasn't looking the boys would pull backward instead of pushing forward to keep from going to school. Sometimes we wouldn't get to school until noon, and sometimes not at all, because of bad roads. We often got home late in the evening because the same thing would happen.

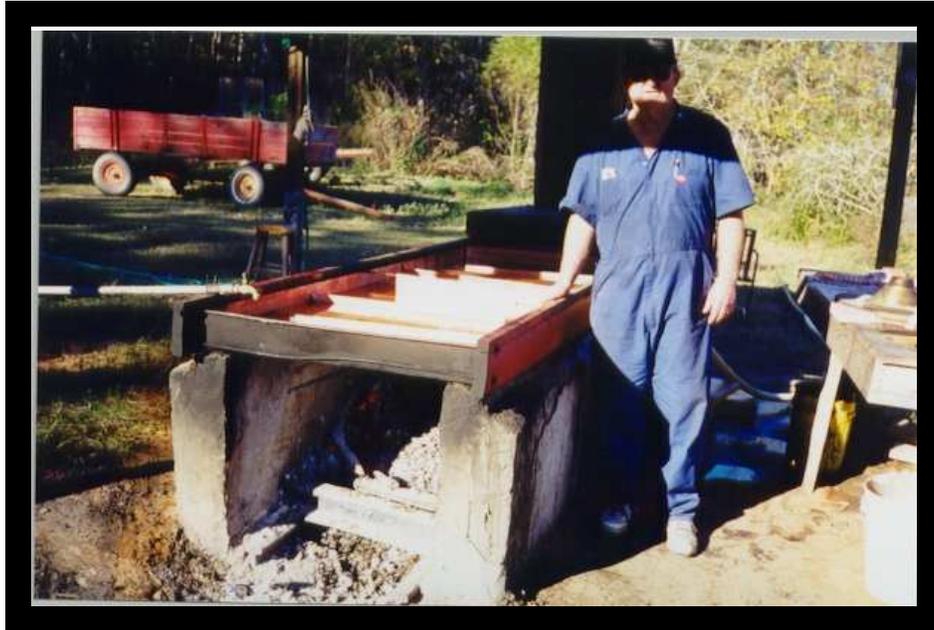
A lot of times it was a hardship to go to school. When we'd get in from school we had to go to the field. We had no electricity so we did our homework at night by studying under a kerosene lamp. We had to pick cotton in the fall and in the spring we had to hoe. In the wintertime we had to cut and pile cornstalks to be burned to get the fields cleaned and ready. During cotton picking time we had to stay out of school to pick cotton, missing so much time it was hard to keep grades up. Children raised on the farm had a hard time, and that's why so many never graduated. We were lucky that we owned our own home, for people that didn't have their own farm had to move from place to place. Their children had to get used to new schools and it was even harder on them than it was on us.

In school they taught us the basics; reading, writing and arithmetic. Later, in high school they started out with stuff like English and history. We also had home economics and agriculture

as basic subjects. I enjoyed home economics but my favorite would have to be history. You had to go to college to get any advanced things like they take now in sixth, seventh and eighth grade now.

Yes, I think history and spelling were my favorite subjects. History made me more curious. I was a good speller and I liked to read. I checked out library books all the time to read on the way to and from school on the bus. I wanted to learn more about what was going on outside my community. I think that's why I like to travel. I still like to know what's out yonder.

CHESTER'S CANE MILL



We arrived at the syrup-making location of Mr. Charles Vaughn just too late to see the syrup flowing past the baffles, but in time to see the bright shine of the scrubbed and polished copper pans before they were stored (under lock and key) until next November. (We did get a taste of the GOOD syrup!) EWS

Taped Interview: March 6, 1989.
Interviewer: Tom Graham
Interviewee: Chester Wells
Location: Newton County, Ms
D.O.B.: 1933

I was born in 1933 in Union, Mississippi, a little place called Tallahassee Swamp in a place we called Center Ridge. When I was a boy growing up, we never had much, struggled a lot. Never did go to town unless it was on a special occasion or something. I walked to school every day. School was about five or six miles from my house. Sick? No sick, no kind of excuses. You had to go, it didn't matter. The school wasn't all that big, just had 12 in my class that I can remember. Just had one room. It's gone now. I don't know actually when they tore it down. I can't remember. I think most of them [my classmates] are still living. I've talked to a few of them, old fellows that still stay around. We used to hang out when we were boys. Fished and hunted together all our lives. Still here.

I plowed when I was a boy. I've done everything from hoeing a garden all day long to plowing the field up with a mule. We planted every spring. Had a big garden every year. It was the only thing we had to live off of other than the fish we caught and the game we killed, and I just done a lot of odds and ends around the house. I've cut wood. It wasn't really bad at times, but at times it got real tough. It was a lot of fun at times. We'd go fishing down at the old creek, and then we'd hunt in the winter time. Boys, we'd all play and have mud fights and just have, what we would call a good old country boy ball. We'd really enjoy it.

We'd go over to old uncle Lot Garrison's a lot. I remember him when I was a boy. He had a big fish net he'd set out in the creek, and every weekend he'd call the whole community up, and could feed the whole community with the fish from that old net. We didn't know then about the net, and I asked my dad many a time how he done it. We never, never could figger out. We'd see him go off with poles and everything, and we just couldn't figger how in the world he could catch enough fish to feed the whole community. Anyway, it was sure delicious.

My father was found on my grandfather's front doorstep one morning. Somebody knocked on the door and when my grandfather got to the door and ill looked down and there was a little baby there at his feet. He picked him up, and they searched for two or three weeks trying to find out who had a baby, had run off and left him, or what. Never did find out who left the kid. Couldn't find anybody around town who would tell whose it was. So they just gave him the Wells name, and it still stands today.

My grandfather ran a syrup mill for a good many years. Kept it up and always made syrup each fall. Two or three years before he died he kind of got down and couldn't run the plant. Couldn't run the mill the way it needed to be run, and he just let it go down. My father, working at the Ford plant, never had an interest in it. So, I just figures there wasn't no sense in just letting it sit around, and I kind of missed the good ole times when my grandfather would make syrup when everybody brought in their sugar cane. It was a big thing. It wasn't right to wake up in the morning and not having molasses to eat with your biscuits. I must have been about 25 when I took the plant up. It was in a good, big mess. I had to redo its firing pan. It was made out of copper. It cost a good bit, but I figured it would be worth it in the long run. Before I had to put all new pans on it, I had to redo the fire walls. Over the years my grandfather had used it, they had burnt out. I just went onto the side of the hill by the mill and got some old rocks about like what my grandfather had, and put them in and got it to going pretty good.

The mill was supposed to have a chimney made. Well, I just took an old culvert and set it up and cut me a hole in it. That thing sucked out just like it couldn't be any better than a chimney, I thought. Old fellow down the road laughed when I first put the thing in. Said he hadn't never seen anything like that before.

I didn't have much to do to the rollers that squeeze the juice out. Those things were built to last. Probably one of the toughest things I've ever seen. That thing's been there a long time. Onliest thing I had to do was go cut me an old tree that I figured would last the longest. I cut me about, I guess, a thirty-foot cedar tree. Drag it up there with my old mule. Threw the heavy end up top to balance everything out, and just tied my mule to the smaller lower end and set him to going around in circles. It'll do the job.

When you make syrup, first of all you have to strip your cane in the field, cut it down and bring in to be dropped off and stacked beside the mill. Instead of the old mule I used to have, I put my riding lawn mower in there to turn the wheel. My mower just goes around pulling the log pretty much by itself so all you have to do is feed the stalks between the juicer wheels. The juicers squeeze and strain trash out, and the juice runs into a 55 gallon drum I have sitting over there in the corner.

When the drum gets full you take the barrel over to the pan and you pour it in. Got a good fire going, and you pour it into the end that's not very hot to start it off. The pan has a bunch of baffles built almost across from side to side that keeps the juice going in a zigzag motion all the way from the end where the fire is to the other. The syrup gradually cooks as it goes, and the more it cooks, the deeper color it's got. You have to pour water in it every now and then, when it gets too hot, to keep it from burning. Burnt syrup, believe me, tastes bad.

I'll tell you, when I first started I had a time with it. I'd pour too much water and leave the skim on it, and I had to pretty much learn how it works. It took me a few months there. I had to burn it a little bit. I didn't burn it a whole lot. You know how it is when you start something. You're gonna mess up the first few months until you get on a roll.

Nowadays, people don't want runny molasses. A man brings his cane up here, he wants thick syrup. You better believe that. He don't want it ruined. I usually charge a quarter of the syrup from people who bring their cane to me. It takes me so much time to work this thing and do all of it, but, you know, I appreciate folks just bringing their cane and giving me their business.

I just like to keep things quiet around here. I wouldn't let that T.V. crew come out here for an interview. I don't like, you know, too much people meddling around and everything. I like to keep things as they were in the good old days. Suits me, the way I was raised. Only the community, you know, messes around over here, just keep it quiet. Go about my own business.

But, tell you what. I really enjoyed this. Ain't many times I talked to people like this.

RAISIN' CANE AND MAKIN' MOLASSES



Taped interview: March 1, 1989.
Interviewer: Steve Fleming
Interviewee: Mr. R. L. Smith
Location: Rolling Creek Community
Quitman, Miss.
D.O.B.: March 21, 1934

Let me say, first of all, that I learnt how to grow sugar cane and make syrup from my daddy and my father-in-law, and my older friends. I will begin from when you are through with your crop in the fall and bed your seed cane down for the winter. Now, when I say "bedding it down", that means you bed it down to store it so you'll have a start for another year come spring.

What you do is to get on the side of a hill where the water will run off, and dig down something like eight to ten inches in the earth to fix a bed for the cane to lay in. Then you just lay your stalks of cane down in layers in the bed. When you get your cane down in there you begin to mound it over with eight or ten inches of dirt. You fix your bed around the edges so the water will run off and this will keep your cane from rotting during the winter and it will keep it from freezing. As you know, you've got lil' ol' eyes on your cane stalks' joints and that's the eyes you have to protect. Let me state that when you are bedding sugar cane down you don't strip it but just cut it down and leave the fodder on to help protect the cane eyes throughout the winter.

First of all, next spring when you get ready to start, you need to be very careful how to select the soil where you plan to plant. You don't need a real stiff, packy soil. It needs to be a light, rich sandy soil.

So after you select the ground you want to plant your crop in, you get your ground prepared by staking your rows off. Next, go to your bed and take the soil off to get the cane ready to transport to where you are going to plant your new crop. Be very careful about handling it 'cause if you knock an eye off, that'll mean you'll have one less stalk of cane to come up. The eyes are important; that's where your new crop is going to come from.

So, now we are over to planting the cane. You've got your ground prepared and you bring your stalks in the field to lay them up and down the rows. After you get it laid out, you go in and throw dirt over the cane with your plow. Alright? You throw about maybe six inches of dirt on the stalks of cane. Now we are talking about in early spring. The canes goin' to lay there where it sprouts and comes up when the weather get warmer.

Alright, once it gets to coming up and gets to about eight or ten inches tall, you begin to start working it out. The way we do it, we go in there and we call it "listing it off". This is throwing all the dirt away from the cane roots with a turning plow. After this is done, you need to hoe the cane out. After the weeds are gone you begin to put the your fertiliz' to your cane. We always put commercial fertilize such as 6-8-8 or 8-8-8, down one side. On the other side of the row we, lots of times, just put plain cotton seed meal. Then you go back in with a small plow and dirt the cane up again. That's the process of working the cane out.

It takes a lot of water to raise sugar cane, it likes a lot of water. If you get an adequate amount of water, then, as spring comes and summer comes on, everything grows as it should and your sugar cane will go on up. It grows pretty fast and when it get up maybe knee-high, or something like that, you may want to go on there and just cultivate it a little, disturb the ground a little bit and keep it loose where it'll grow and keep the grass and weeds down, and so on.

Now, let's go to the stage where it's just about grown too tall to get in there and work it. Let's say we are going into the final stage of working it, so this is where you go in there and fertiliz' it again. Put some more commercial fertiliz' there and put more cotton seed meal around

it. That completes the working stage of your crop. Your cane patch is 'laid by' until fall. In other words, from now on it depends on the season, the water and stuff like that, to show how well your crop is going to grow. After this, comes fall and you've had a good year, and you begin to think about harvesting your crop and getting it ready to go to mill.

The next stage, you've got to strip the cane. This means to get the fodder off each cane stalk. Old-timers have, in years past, come up with strippers, a little ol' forked thing made of a piece of metal, that you go start at the stop of the stalk and come down it. When you come down it takes the fodder off, and you continue on through the field, stripping. Okay? When you get it all stripped you are about ready to take it to the mill. You go back with the wagon and break the cane tops off and cut the stalks down and load them in the wagon. You use a cane knife, a kind of a machete or some kind of cutting device, to cut the stalks down even with the ground.

Then you got to move it to your mill. Steve, there are two different parts to the mill. You've got the grinder, or squeezer, where you run stalks of cane through to squeeze out the juice. Then you've got your cooker, which is your pan and your furnace to cook out the moisture, the water, out of the cane. These two things at the mill that will concern you about making syrup from your cane.

Back in the field, we haul our cane out after we've got it stripped, topped, cut down and loaded up on a truck or a wagon or something. We haul the stalks to the mill and stack them up near the squeezer, which is the grinder. We stack the cane with the little top ends facing the grinder so the man who feeds the stalks into the grinder can poke in the little ends first as they will go in easy. Most of the time the grinder-squeezer was turned by an old mule but now in modern days, it is turned with a tractor with a PTO hooked up with a vacuum and sprocket and so forth and so on, to turn the grinder to smash the cane to get the juice out.

Most of the time there is a 55-gallon drum that catches the juice. In most cases you need a drum of juice before you ever start to build a fire in the furnace to cook the syrup off. The mill is always on a hillside, a little bit higher than the cooking pan so you can run a plastic line of three-quarter inch plastic, from the bottom of the juice barrel to your pan, the place you begin your cooking.

Alright, we are ready to progress to running juice into the pan to make syrup. We begin to build our fire in our brick furnace, you reckon... first let me explain the furnace.

Okay, you go in there and build a long furnace covered with a cooking pan. Your pan is something like ... ah, let's see, about three foot wide and about nine or ten feet long, and the thing has troughs in it. The furnace is built with a metal door at one end where you build and stoke your fire. It's heat goes about nine or ten foot underneath the pan a then out into the atmosphere through a chimney. Before starting your fire you run in about three or four inches of juice to keep your empty pan from burning. Most of the time these pans are made of copper, but in modern times, Steve, some people got pans made of stainless steel.

So now that we've got a fire going and three or four inches of juice in our pan, we start cooking. The cooking process is to boil the juice to get it to a temperature where you cook the water out. I find that there is really no person can tell you how to do this, you learn how by 'doing it. When the liquid gets so hot it starts boiling, there'll be a white foam on top ... Anyway, the hotter it gets the more water it's going to cook out and begins to turn colors. When you get to the point where it begins to "cook off", as we call it, to make syrup, it has turned a yellow tint. When it turns yellow you watch it and hold it at that point for a time. You just have to learn this by doing. You keep the juice flowing at all times from where it runs in down to the far end of the pan. When it begins to turn a little brown the juice is beginning the syrup stage.

There is a lot of things you have to do during the process of cooking off. You've got foam 'skimmins' that boil up, along with old husks and stuff that comes out of the juice. You just dip

it off and throw it away because it's no good for anything. You dip it off with a little dipper, a strainer-dipper, you know, something like a screen wire basket on the end of a long handle.

When it turns brown you begin to run off a little syrup. This is not a constant thing where you run off syrup all the time. In other words, you may have to run off a few gallons and then stop at different times. You've got a plug at the end of your pan, the hottest end, so you can drain out the cooked syrup. When it gets to the point where you know it's syrup, you let a gallon or two run out into a two-and-a-half or a three gallon can that's got a strainer on it. A lot of times, the strainer is a white rag. Lot of times I've seen where an old stocking is used to strain the syrup as it comes out of the pan.

After you run enough finished syrup out to where the juice left in the pan begins to lighten up, you put the plug back in. After the juice cooked a little more with you stirring and dipping it, it turns brown again and you are ready to run a little more off. It's not a constant thing to make syrup. Your fire is a very important thing. You need to keep as near a constant fire in the furnace as you possibly can, which is sometimes a hard thing to do. The better fireman you've got, the better syrup and the more syrup you can run off in a day's time.

So, you go through this process all the time you're cooking, with most of the time having in fresh juice going in. Juice flows in one end and you work it out as syrup on the other end. At the end of the day when you run out of juice, you run in water in to keep from burning your pan. You put your fire out when you start running the water through. That's your cooling down period. The water will run the juice to the other end of the pan where you can make sure you get most all of your juice made into molasses.

After you are through with the cooking, you start what you call canning your syrup. The syrup is stored in gallon or half-gallon syrup cans, or molasses buckets. You put up the cane syrup in cans all along as you fill up your little pot from the cooking pan. It's got a little spout on it that you use to fill the cans up with before you put on their lids. The filled and closed cans are just set aside to cool.

So, as far as I can say, Steve, that's the process of making sugar-cane syrup, or molasses.

[Mr. Smith went on to say that making syrup back in the old days was a community project. He said that the community would get together to work on this. Most farmers had a cane patch and they would get together to make syrup. He said some people without cane patches, would often walk many a mile each day to help out with the syrup making process, often working eight to ten hours a day, taking nothing home for pay except maybe a gallon of syrup at the end of the day.-Steve Fleming]

LIFE IN LAMAR COUNTY, ALABAMA



Taped Interview: February 4, 1989.

Interviewer: Lori H. Speed, Great-Granddaughter of Interviewee.

Interviewee: Mrs. Ruby Minnie Dee Curry

Location: Route 2, Box 260,
Millport, Ala. 35576

D.O.B.: October 13, 1907

I was raised as an only child. I guess it was good, for I got more attention and didn't have to share with another. Of course, it would have been good to have had a brother or sister my age.

One of the things I remember best from my childhood happened when I was visiting at a neighbor's house. This neighbor lived in a log cabin and the kitchen was made of logs. Of course, like any other kid, I started wandering around, just looking, and found where some child had put his wad of gum in a crack of the house and I got it. [Laughter]. Back then, Mother never had money to get gum or candy, or stuff like that.

I didn't chew the gum around my mother but waited until I got home. My grandmother saw me chewing and asked me where I got that wax. (We called it wax back then.) I told her I didn't want to talk about it. When my mother come around, Grandma told her I had stole some gum. My mother whipped me and made me take it back and tell them I had stole it. I don't think I'll ever forget that.

The best I can remember, I started washing dishes when I had to stand in a chair to reach the dishpan. If I didn't get them clean, I'd have to wash them over. I've washed more dishes in my life than anybody you can find.

The cabin I grew up in was just two big rooms with a hall down the middle. It was over here where Foy's house is now. In later years a dining room and kitchen were added behind one room, and on the other room we put in another bedroom. Our bedrooms were big. You could put up two big beds and dressers and tables and then have plenty room to get around. And a big fireplace -- that's what we had to warm by.

We had a well out in the yard that we drewed water out of. It was 65 feet deep. We were having it cleaned when it caved in, so we had to haul water. Then we dug another well and they had gone to get tile to go in it when it caved in, too. We ended up with a third well before we had water and it was way down below the barn, so had to haul water for a long spell, for everything.

They dug the well with shovels and it took a good long time. After they got way down in there you could hardly see them and it looked right scary to me. One night they worked all night. Next morning before daylight he woke me up singing his spirituals so loud. [Laughter]

School was about two or three miles away and if it was a bad day, I didn't get to go. If it was rainy or cloudy much, my mother wouldn't let me. I enjoyed school but I never did get to go much. I never got to finish the fourth grade.

I was rough on shoes and they didn't last long, maybe because Mama got me cheapest shoes she could find and they just wasn't a good shoe. Then she got me boys shoes to wear and I hated those things but I had to wear them whether I wanted to or not. We always had clothes on our backs and they weren't the finest, but they covered up our nakedness.

I had a good friend [name inaudible] and me, we'd make a playhouse out of straw and get moss to fix us beds and dressers for our house. It was real pretty. I enjoyed it. We was good friends. Now, I had one friend that wasn't much of a friend 'cause she made fun of my dresses and said I wore the same one all the time. She hurt my feelings and I cried and cried. I didn't have but two dresses to wear to school. Her parents had a store and she could dress nice but I couldn't because my mother didn't have a way of making money. They'd farm, she and my

granddaddy, what little they could, but they couldn't make over a bale of cotton a year. She drew a check for \$12 every three months and we raised what we had to eat. We just didn't have money to buy nothing with.

My father had died when I was eighteen months old. I don't remember him at all but my mother said that he was crazy about me. He had a heart problem and she said she'd always go put feed in the trough at dinnertime for the mule he was plowing. One day he said he was afraid if he didn't get better, he wasn't going to be with her long. And he didn't live long. He died in the field plowing. I believe he was 59 and my mother was 39.

My grandparents were both old when they moved in to live with my mother after my daddy died. Then my grandmother fell and broke her hip. She was in bed with her broken hip a long time before she died. My grandfather lived with mother till his youngest son died, and then he went to live with his daughter-in-law. He lived with her until he died.

I had older step-brothers and step-sisters, but they all died young. Most of them were already dead when my mother and daddy married. I can barely remember two, Tom and Lem Robertson. We weren't very close. One had a daughter about my age but mother would not let me go home with her to spend the night. She'd hardly let me go anywhere without her going along.

My other step-brother died real young. Had a heart attack, I think.

Me and my husband [Goldman Curry] met when Mama hired him to work for her. She knew his parents. She had to hire someone to do her work and she hired him.

Long before I thought of marrying him, Goldman had to go off to World War I. I was sad to see him go because we were such close friends after he worked for Mama so much. We were afraid that we'd never see him again.

He wrote my mother all the time to let her know where he was and what was going on. We were all just friends.

He never did go into the fighting part. He was to have left the day after Armistice was signed, for overseas. But it was signed and he didn't have to have to go into battle. He had been trained to shoot machine guns.

After he came home he went off one fall to pick cotton in Arkansas. He'd write me letters, but Mama, if she knew I got one, she'd have to read it. I'd get a letter and get off somewhere by myself and answer it, you know. He always sent me stamps to write him back. We had a sort of a hard time doing any courtin'.

We got married the 3rd day of February in 1921. I was 13 years, 6 months, and 13 days old. Goldman Curry was 26. My wedding day was a happy day until I got carsick and vomited everywhere. A friend of ours made my wedding dress from a pretty piece of poplin material. I didn't have no flowers but we had a car -- a taxi. We was married in Caledonia, Mississippi by a Methodist preacher, but neither of us belonged to any church at that time.

We lived with Mama after we got married. Back then we didn't go to church like we do now, but we had company come in nearly every Sunday to eat dinner with us. We done things like that all the time.

We farmed but in the wintertime Goldman trapped and hunted. He'd catch 'coons and mink and possums, and then he'd go off to Pickens County and Tuscaloosa County to buy more furs. A lot of times he'd have to go off to work and I'd have to stretch the skins out. He'd ship them off to sell them, but sometimes two men from off somewhere would come to buy them. One or two would come ever so often and stay all night. He always had a big bunch of hides for them.

I was fifteen when Dorothy, my first baby, was born. I don't remember being scared. I never had no experience, but I guess I done pretty good. We had a happy life. We didn't have no fusses, no problems.

The first car I ever saw was the mail carrier's. His name was Conner -- I forget his first name. Then my uncle got a car, but I don't remember which one was the first I saw. I was afraid of them, and didn't think I'd want to ride in one, but the mail carrier picked me up one time and I got to ride in his car a little ways. The first car we got was a T-Model Ford. It was a used one, it wasn't brand new. We were thrilled with it and one time we went to Missouri and back in it. Didn't have no problem at all. It took us one day to get there.

When we were farming and me and your Grandma Robertson went out to work in the fields, we'd take the baby with us. When we was chopping cotton or thinning corn, we'd take a blanket and get big ole forked sticks and stand them up so we could spread the blanket over them, and put a quilt down to put the baby on. I'd hoe from one end, hoe from the end of the row up to where the baby was. I was afraid to put it out next to the woods, afraid a snake would come up. That's the way I done a lot of my work. I'd take a hoe, a quilt and a jug of water with something to eat, all to the field.

We had nine children and all of them are living but one. Their names were Dorothy, born in October, Gertha born in November, Shelby in November, Doris [Iris?] in November, Foy in February, Laverda in February, Paul in June, Elaine in November, and Sharon in August. There! I said them all!

Dorothy was 22 months old when Gertha, your grandmother, came along. She was real good about it and loved her baby sister. It's been so long now that I don't remember much about what happened when they were babies. I read to them out of their storybooks. Gertha was always full of herself. [Laughter] She was always jolly. Never seen a sad minute, I don't guess. She was just happy. Dorothy, she was the one that wanted to be the boss and she wanted to work and wanted everybody else to work, too. If they weren't doing what she thought they ought, she'd try to make them. The others would just ignore her, as much as they could get by with.

They were all, you could say, good children. I never had no problems with them. They were like all other kids -- they'd fuss. Always had two of them that was to do the dishes and they'd fuss over that -- one'd say it was the other one's time and the other'd say, no it wasn't. Doris [Iris] and Shelby, they would always get into a fuss about whose time it was to wash the dishes. They'd wash dishes while Gertha brought in water and Paul got in stovewood.

We were always scarce of water. I have hauled enough water -- lots of times had to haul it to wash clothes and use in the house. There wasn't no such thing as having a bathroom. We went outside to go to the bathroom.

When the Depression came we had to watch how we used food because during that time you couldn't hardly get pork. If we didn't raise it, we just had to almost do without. Back then we had what we called middlin' meat to boil with vegetables, and we had to have it for lard, too. There was no such thing as shortening. We got flour just so much at a time -- lots of things you couldn't find. We had our own milk and stuff like that. We had a garden, cows, hogs, and chickens. We made it, I guess, pretty good.

Generally, in the fall when the kids got in from school, they had to go to the field and pick cotton. They'd come in and I'd have them something to eat. They'd get a snack and then go to the cotton patch. I'd make them cookies and baked sweet potatoes. That's what they loved. I'd give them biscuit, bacon, eggs and syrup for breakfast. We raised our own syrup. You know, we growed ribbon cane and sorghum cane for our syrup. One year we raised 157 gallon of ribbon cane and sold it all except what we held back for our own use. We'd keep what we

thought we'd need of our sorghum molasses, too. Back then we used sorghum to bake cakes out of. We'd stack them with dried apples. There wasn't so such thing as buying a box of cake mix.

We had a syrup mill. We'd get the fodder off the cane stalks and cut it down and carry it to the mill. They'd put a mule to the mill to grind the cane to get the juice out. There was a big old pan and there was always somebody, a manperson, that cooked the juice into syrup. The mill had a fire built under the pan and it would boil the juice like everything into thick syrup. I had to carry dinner out to the mill every day they worked.

Me and the girls had to wash our clothes outdoors near the well. We rubbed them on a scrub board in a soapy tub of water, and put them in the old iron wash pot and built a fire around it to boil them. Then we'd take them out and rinse them through two or three waters and hang them on the line. We put bluing in the last rinse to make them pretty and white, just dissolved the bluing into the water until it turned blue. Then we had irons, smoothing irons, to press our clothes. We put the irons on the stove to get hot, and then stood by the ironing board for hours to iron. It would take about half a day, ironing as hard as you could go. We had to be particular with starched white shirts if they got scorched they had to be washed again.

I took my eggs and every week when a rolling store come by, I bought pretty material to make dresses for my girls. It would cost ten or fifteen cents a yard. I'd have enough eggs in a week to buy one of them a dress, and then the next week, I'd buy another one. Did that until I got them all a dress, and then I'd start over. I sewed and made their dresses.

When we bought cow feed that come in a printed sack, I'd use the sack to make dresses. They were real cute. I didn't try to made clothes for my boys. Well, I did when they were babies. I'd made what we called rompers. Just little plain outfits and the little legs had elastic in them. But I usually bought for their clothes.

Foy never would wear short pants, hardly. I always had to get him long ones. He didn't want no short pants. Paul didn't care. I didn't have no problem with him. He'd wear about anything I put on him.

Your great-granddaddy farmed till he went into saw milling. The last twenty years he was able to work he operated a sawmill. We quit farming, only making a garden and pea patches and things like that.

I don't remember that World War II had much effect on our family at home. Jerry had to go and like to have got killed a time or two. That was bad. [She does not make it clear who Jerry was; he may have been one of her grandsons.]

Armand had to go overseas, but he wasn't in none of the fighting. That was Dorothy's first husband. That's the only two in the family that had to go.

Your Papa [great-grandfather] built this house. Or had it done. We have lived here ever since, about 38 years. Sharon was about two years old when we moved here and now she's forty. Before that we lived over near where Foy's house is. That was where I was born and all my kids was born there but one. Sharon was born at the hospital in Fayette.

It was a big step for us when we built this house. We all, Mama and us all, moved in here. We all thought it was a nice house when we moved here. Shelby was about two years old when we joined the church and now she's 62. Bro .Gus Nichols baptized us and we begin holding meetin's in our home when we still lived in our old house. Brother W. A. Black come preaching f or us after we got to meeting regular. We met for a good while before they decided to build us a church building. Papa was doing saw milling then and he furnished the lumber, he just sawed it and give it. He give money, too, to buy other stuff they had to have. He furnished the land, too. He give an acre for the church building and later he give three more acres for the cemetery.

Papa and a Mr. Russell and some more men all went in together and built one big room, you know, and we all met in it. In the summertime we had what we called the [Kinder-roller?] Class for the little ones, and they went outside in the summertime to meet under a shade tree for class. We started like that till we got to going, and then we added on so now we have, some Sundays, over 100 to come.

Papa was a good Christian man, and had lots of friends. He knowed how to run a business. The world has changed a lot from the time I was a child back in the horse and buggy days. There wasn't hardly no cars back then. Once in a while you'd see one, but not often. We didn't have no electricity. Had old oil lamps. That's what my kids had to study by when they were going to school. We got a Aladdin lamp one time and it made such a good light, we just thought we had the best light a-tall. don't see any of them anymore. I don't know what went with ours.

I am 81 years old now and have 22 grandchildren. I think there's about twelve great grandchildren, but I've lost count. [Laughter] My grandchildren that live away are might-near like strangers, 'cause I don't never see them.

Course, I got some around that's real close, like your mother and Sharon's children. And Terry, you know, he's here close now. I see him a lot. Some of them live in Texas. Some live in Colorado -- and in Washington. Don't see them much. Got some good grandchildren, got some boys in college, real nice boys that never give their parents any problems. Got some girls that's been to college and out of college, that's real nice.

They used to come and spend the night when they were growing up, them and their cousins together, you know, and they'd just play and have a good time. Always liked to come, seemed like. Now they've got jobs, some of them, and don't get to come much.

Your mother come here a lot when they lived close enough. But now they're away, most of the time, in other states. She doesn't get to come but maybe once or twice a year. Dorothy, you know, doesn't come back but maybe once a year. But the rest of them lived close enough around. Now Elaine and them, when Arnold was in the service, they didn't get to come, either, because they were in Arizona for a year or two, and he didn't get to come more than once a year.

I remember the first plane I ever rode was going to Elaine's. Went to Dallas, one of the boys takened me out there, where I caught the plane and went to Tucson and stayed three weeks. Then come back by plane. That's the only plane trip I ever made. I was glad to see the ground! [Laughter]

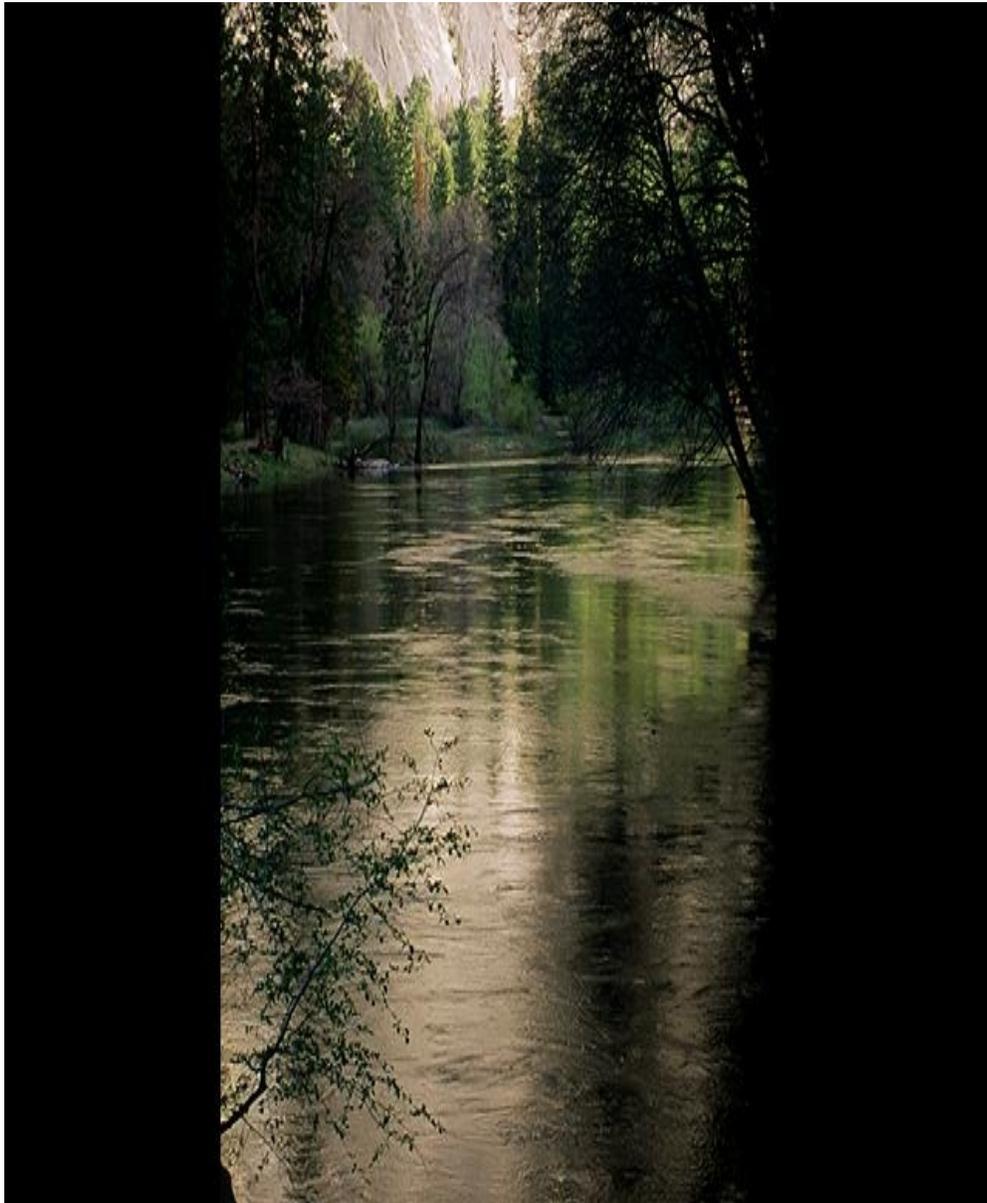
I go every summer with some of them on vacation, with Gertha and Elaine. I went to Gatlinburg and went to Kentucky and to Florida. Different places, I can't think of all of them. I can't think where I went with Gertha one time. I know we enjoyed it so much. We went to your mother's in Kentucky and Johnny was in a -- I forget where he was at, but anyway, we all got together and went and just had a big time. I believe it was Cincinnati where Johnny was. I know it was bad cold up there and it in August. People were wearing sweaters the day we left.

Most days now I stay busy making dolls and doing my housework, cooking and taking food to the sick. I go to the nursing home and visit with them people there. I go to every church service, and for the ones from church that's sick, I fix food. I clean the church every week, have been doing that for four or five years, I guess. Well, they pay me to do it but my main living comes from Social Security.

I'm thankful for my health and for my children. My biggest accomplishment in life, I guess, was raising my nine children. My biggest regret, in thinking back, is maybe I could have done more for other people and done more church work and things like that. I've always just prayed to the Good Lord to give me health and strength that I could always do my own work and help those less fortunate than I am. I'd like to be remembered, more than for anything else I guess, for living a good life and helping others.

We had hard times back in the old days, but everybody seemed happy and loved each other and takened time to go help each other out if they was needed. Things like that, you know, wasn't nothing like what it is now. We don't have time for friends now, or for nothing else, much. Everybody is just too busy.

THE MYSTERY OF JUZAN LAKE



Taped interview: February 15, 1889.

Interviewer: Tonette Blackwell

Interviewee: Olen Ferguson

Location: Route 2, Box 88
Decatur, Mississippi.

Juzan Lake, located here in Newton County about five miles northeast of Hickory, has been in existence since long before I was born. This natural lake runs out of a swamp into a creek and, running north and south, it is longer than it is wide. Some people call it Hollow Lake because of the rumor that money lies buried in there. It was named for a Frenchman from Mobile, Pierre Juzan, who settled here 'way over a hundred years ago and put up an inn on the old Jackson Military Road. On a bluff out of the flood-plane, the inn over-looked the lake and its surrounding swamp.

General Andrew Jackson built his Military Road [along which Juzan built his inn] after the War of 1812 while on his way back north from Mobile. I don't know all the route it took but it probably went on down through Garlandville or Paulding and on down through that way. Used to be a good dirt road up in there, but they've cut timber and logs you know, with these skidders and things, and there's not much of a road in there now. You couldn't hardly walk up in there now, I expect. I haven't been there in a long time. I don't remember when Juzan lived there, but I remember where the old inn was, up on a bluff from the lake on an old trail -- you used to could see some signs of the old trail that went through there.

We called the road, always used to call it, Boothe Road, the old dirt road going by the lake, because it led on out there to the Boothe settlement. When Andrew Jackson became president they renamed the Boothe settlement "Hickory". You see, "Old Hickory" was Gen. Jackson's nickname, and that's where Hickory, Mississippi got its name at. I think they call it Tatum Road now because the Tatums live on it. The old inn was located right north of this road that goes down here and goes across the creek, you know, and comes out in Hickory by the Tatum place.

In olden days lots of people from north Mississippi traveled the road on their way down to Mobile to get supplies and stuff, being farmers and things, and they would stop along the way at Juzan's Inn to spend the night. They would drink and gamble at his place and if they had money, Juzan and an Indian buddy of his would dispose of them that night after they went to sleep. The rumor is that he buried their bodies or dumped them in his lake down there. We used to think the lake didn't have any bottom but it really has a bottom only it is very deep.

The thing I don't understand is, if they kept killing these people, why didn't someone get on to it and the police could have done somethin' about it? If he done away with a whole family, there wouldn't have been anybody to report it, but a lot of times the whole family wasn't there and mostly there'd be just one or two men. With no transportation and not much way of communication and everything, I guess they'd just disappear. Their families probably thought that, with them goin' off on such a deserted trail, well, anything could have happened to them, and they died along the trail and they never knowed what happened to them. They say ol' Juzan didn't bother them if they didn't have no money. [laughter] They said he was just after those that had money.

The rumor is that the lake has Juzan's gold buried in it. They say that Juzan, when he got to be an old man, had his Indian put his money in a deer hide and sewed it up, his gold. You know, people used to pay their bills and everything with gold back in those days. He had his Indian carry his gold down to the lake on the back of a mule, or so the tale goes, and dump in. Then old man Juzan killed his Indian friend and made him fall in the lake so he would be the

only one to know where the money was. As far as I know, nobody had ever found his treasure buried in there.

I don't know what become of Juzan, never did hear. He probably died there at his place. They say he was getting pretty old when he dumped his gold. I guess he had decided he wasn't going to live too much longer when he did away with his treasure. I don't know why he didn't want nobody to know where it was. I reckon he didn't have any people, maybe. There's never been nobody that ever knowed what happened to him, or a least we never have got any report as to whatever happened. That all came about a long, long time ago.

Now, it was in the 30's, the 1930's, when they pumped the water out [of Juzan Lake], looking for gold. I remember that. Used to be a good road up in there, but they've cut the virgin timber and logs, you know, with these skidders and things, and there's not much of a road in there now. I went there many a time to watch them when they pumped the water out. They used a couple of tractors and hooked up a hose to a pump. Trouble was, the lake bottom was lower than the creek that runs through it, and water seeped back from the creek into the lake. That's the reason the lake has never been known to go dry. It took several days with them two tractors runnin' for them to pump it out.

People had been there many times hunting treasure, but this was the only time the lake was dreened [drained], or practically dreened, until there was just a little bit of water left. But the money needle still pointed right down in the center of the lake. [Apparently they used a metal detector.] Even after they dreened it, they made a big outfit, looked sort of like a well-cover, and they worked down in that and went even deeper in there. There was something hard, but I don't know if it was bedrock or what they finally hit, but they hit something solid down in there.

As much water they got out of there, and with money needles and all, look to me like they would have found something. The land was owned by a Hopkins, who had a lot of land. He give these people, I don't know who the people was that dreened it, but he give them permission and also rented them those tractors to use. The people that was trying to find the gold agreed to split it with the landowner Hopkins. I don't know. I doubt if there was ever any money there, 'cause somebody would have had to have knowed it. Anyways, nobody ever found it that anybody knows anything about.

Some of the people around here, maybe not now, but in the past, wouldn't even go near the lake on account of the horror stories about. They had a horror of going up there where these people had been killed and buried. They were just rumors, you know. I've been there lots of times and people have fished in it. They don't catch a great amount of fish there, and there wasn't many in there when they drained it, but there were some.

It used to be pretty at the lake when all the timber was around. A lot of folk would go camp there on the banks up there, some would. But it would get a little spooky out there at night. [laughter] I've been down there and we'd build fires out in the woods and stay all night huntin' all up in there. Way into the night, it does get a little spooky. [Laughter.] People say if you go there when the moon is full you can see old Juzan's ghost hoverin' over the water, making sure no one gets his gold.

THE BARRIERS, A LOGGING FAMILY



Taped interview: February 28, 1989.
Interviewer: Chuck Lea
Interviewee: Dale Barrier
Location: Route 3, Box 328-B
Philadelphia, Mississippi
D.O.B.: March 26, 1926

Barrier is a French name. My first cousin, Claude Kirkland, Jr. , has traced our family tree back to France. In the early 1600's France was largely Roman Catholic but the Barrier family was Protestant. This didn't go over too well so we were run out of France and went to Germany to flee persecution. In those days there was a lot of persecution going on to the Protestant believers. To keep from being persecuted in Germany, we changed our name from Barrier to Berger.

Later, in the 1700's, the King of England granted my third or fourth great-granddaddy, Abraham Berger in Germany, some land in South Carolina to come over here. He gave some and he, Abraham, made the trip across the Atlantic Ocean in a sailboat. When he arrived in America, he went back to his original French name of Abraham Barrier.

When the Revolutionary War came up, the Barriers, in that day, were on the King's side and were classified as Tory. The other half of my dad's family were Copelands, who were strong American patriots. I guess the Barriers have been kind of suffering ever since the Revolutionary War for their wrongdoings, such as being Tories, because somehow or another, we never have prospered like a lot of other families. Maybe there's been a hex on our life, or something, because there's probably less than a thousand Barriers in the United States. We're just not a real large family. You can go to some of your larger cities and take a telephone directory down and you won't find any Barriers. There are very few, some are over in Atlanta, a few there. And I think there's a few in Houston. Some in Jackson. By far, the biggest portion of them are right here in Philadelphia.

My folks here in Philadelphia are loggers. The first log truck my family had was a 1946 Chevrolet with wooden bolsters on it. We had power saws, but we had to cut the tree down and then cut it up in lengths were it fell. We had a mule to snake the logs back out to the truck with. We had two skid poles that went from the ground up to the bolsters, and a chain that we used to roll the logs up those skid poles onto the bolster of the truck. We had another mule that we had hooked up on the right side of the truck with a cross-haul chain. We'd throw that chain over the truck and the one that actually rolled the log up on the truck was in a loop and we'd hook that cross-haul into the center of the chain, or thereabouts, to make it roll up the skid poles straight. This was long before tree lengthing, or hauling whole logs to the mill, the whole length of the tree, what we call tree lengthing now, ever started up in this part of the country. We did that for, I don't know, several years.

After we got through cutting logs out of a tree, we would take those old big wooden bolsters off and put some standards up on the truck, we'd go back in there and cut the tops up into pulpwood. We had to hand-load all of our pulpwood onto the truck. We didn't have any power-type loaders for that, either. Just manhandled it. Had to have a strong back and a weak mind to get out there and do this type of work.

Today's equipment has taken some of the sure-enough hard work out of logging. You've got big skidders that go down there and pull four or five whole trees out of the woods up to a loading ramp. You've got a big machine that will pick up one to two or three trees up at the same time and put them on the truck. And you haul the whole thing to the mill. It's made it so much easier than what it was when we were having to do it with mules and horses.

I can remember back in 1965, I believe, you got about \$9 a unit for a unit of hardwood pulpwood, and about \$13 a unit for a unit of pine pulpwood. Today's prices, you get around \$30 a cord for hardwood and \$35 or \$36 for pine. A unit is about a fourth again larger than a cord. In other words, it's about 1.25 cords. So, you haul less wood for more money now in pulpwood. Prices for logs, a thousand feet of hardwood logs, run about \$70 to \$90 a thousand. Good hardwood logs now will run something around \$240 a thousand. Pine logs brought something about \$140 a thousand in 1965, and today they range anywhere from \$240 to \$300 a thousand. So, the prices have gone up considerably and the cost of your equipment has gone up along with it.

You got basically two different types of skidders that you use out in the woods today. You got one that's called a choker, or a cable skidder. And then you got a grapple skidder. On the choker, or cable type skidder, the driver has to get off and pull a big cable out and hook chokers to the logs to wench them back up to the machine, and pull the logs to the ramp. The grapple type skidder has got hydraulic arms on it that he backs up to the log, lets it down with a lever, and pinches the log to pull it back to the loading ramp. A quality type skidder today will run you in the neighborhood of \$80,000 to \$90,000.

When you get the logs to the loading ramp, you've got two different type loaders to use in this area. You've got what we call a knuckle-boom loader, or else a front-end loader. The front end loader is a tractor-type machine that has forks on its front end that are operated hydraulically. It picks the logs up and moved them around to load them on the truck. Whereas, the knuckle-boom loader is stationary. It has to pile up all the logs up right behind it and then load them onto the tuck. A knuckle-boom will run you somewhere in the neighborhood of \$40,000 to \$45,000.

To start wood, to cut the trees down, some loggers are still using saw hands with chain saws, where a lot of loggers have gone to what we call cut-down machines. In the past ten to fifteen years they've used what we call a shear, or feller buncher head. It just pinched the tree off right down close to the ground. The lumber companies found that this was putting a lot of pressure on the butt of the tree which caused the lumber to split after it was cut, the end of the lumber to splinter. They wanted to get away from that because they were losing about two good foot of good lumber on all the butt cuts. They came out with a new type head to go these machines that uses a saw similar to a chain saw, just a little larger. It eliminated this problem. These cut-down machines run anywhere from \$60,000 to about \$140,000 or \$160,000, according to what type head you use.

As I stated a while ago, when we started logging we had a 1946 6-cylinder truck that run on gasoline with a four-speed transmission. Today's major log trucks are diesel rigs that have anywhere from three to four hundred, or even more horse power, and anything from a six to fifteen speed transmission. The difference is, I think, we give something like about \$800 or \$900 for that old '46 Chevrolet, and you go buy a new truck today, you'll pay around \$64,000 for it.

Then you've got to have a bulldozer to build roads with to get these trucks out with. When you're out there working you can't afford to have a lot of down-time if you tear them up. You don't want to get them scratched up so you've got to build a road through the woods big enough to get them out. Plus, when it's wet, or you are working in a wet area, you've got to have something to assist those trucks to get out. This is one type place that a front-end loader is better for you than a knuckle-boom, 'cause your front-end loader can get behind the truck and sort of pick up on the logs and help push at the same time. I've seen it when we had two skidders hooked to the front end of the truck and the front-end loader behind it pushing it. It gets pretty rough when you are having to get along with that much equipment just to get a truck out of the woods.

But then, the demand for lumber is so much more today than it was years ago, till some of the mills around require anywhere from 40 to 140 of these big truck loads of logs a day, just to keep the mills in operation. In the past 20 or 25 years or so, logging has really become a big business in all this surrounding area. That includes Lauderdale, Newton, Neshoba, Kemper, Winston, and Leake Counties. Everything around here is dependent upon a lot of logging. I'm not saying it's the only type of industry, but if you took the logging industry away from this part of the country, there would be a lot of people out of work and looking for something else to do. For a lot of us, that's the only thing we know how to do because we've never done anything else.

My folks have always been loggers, lived mostly around here and didn't do much farming. Well, I think back in the late '50's, after World War II when we moved back to Philadelphia from Jackson, my uncle, T. J. Barrier, had people coming from all the surrounding communities to bring their sugar cane to him in the fall after it had ripened and gotten sweet. They'd cut it down and do what they'd call "shucking" it, taking the leaves off the cane. They'd bring it by the wagon-load to his cane mill in the pasture in front of his house.

This mill, the way he started it off, he'd set a wagon of cane right up next to the part that squeezed the sugar cane. He had a long tree, probably of cedar or oak, about six or eight inches across in diameter and about thirty foot long, bolted across the top of the cane press. It stuck way out there with a mule hooked up to it. Somebody would start the mule by leading him to get him to walking in a circle. That would turn the two rollers that squeezed the juice from the cane. You had to have one person to sit there and feed one or two stalks at a time into the mill.

As the stalks passed through the rollers, juice was squeezed from the cane into a little funnel and into a pipe that went on down the hill, maybe 30 yards away from the press, to the cooking pan. This was a long pan about fifteen foot long, I'd say, that was built sort of like a maze. The juice came in at one end and started working its way around down through the maze to the opposite end. By the time it got down there the juice was cooked into a syrup. It was all gravity fed. It was no pumps or anything to it. It had to be a flow, you kind of had to keep it going along at the same rate.

Uncle T.J. was considered one of the best sugar cane cookers in this part of the country. He knew just how to keep his fire built under the cooking pan. It took a lot of wood and a lot of preparation because the fire underneath the pan had to be kept just so. If the juice didn't cook long enough, it came out what the old timers called 'grainy'. It didn't taste right and it would sour on you. On the other hand, if it was cooked too long or if the fire was too hot, the syrup scorched and a month or so after it was canned it would turn to sugar. Cooking required the right touch and my uncle would stand there and stir and stir with his homemade paddle, keeping the juice running through the maze, slowly winding it's way down the pan to the spicket.

Aunt Ethel, she would sit there near the old wooden stopper that went into the pan. When Uncle T.J. said he thought it was ready, she'd pull the stopper out. She kept white flour sacks, 25-lb flour sacks, that she would put over the mouth of the bucket. She'd strain that syrup through those flour sacks to make sure there wasn't any foreign matter had got into it because it was all open under the shed. If the wind got to blowing, it would kind of blow whatever was laying around across the open cooking pan. She would be tasting the syrup all along and Uncle T. J. would taste it as he stood there watching it cook. It'd be bubbling and he'd tell Herbert May, who usually helped him, that he needed more fire under a certain section of the pan, or if it was getting too hot, to pull some of the fire back.

He had a long iron pipe with a little fork made on the end so he could pull the fire around. He didn't have any temperature gauges or anything like that, he did it by sight and by how thick the syrup was getting as it come down through there.

I can remember going down there to watch when I was just a kid. He always had a dipper hanging right there where the juice came out to flow into the pan. We get us a dipper full of pure cane juice to drink instead of having to chew the stalks to get to the juice. That was one of the highlights of the cane season.

He never charged money for making syrup but he took a toll. That way people got their cane made up without it costing them hard cash. In other words, ever so many cans of syrup that he made, he kept a can for himself to pay for his labor. Later he would sell his cans of syrup to get his pay. He put in some long hard hours on it. They'd usually get started right after daylight and he'd try to finish cooking off a batch of syrup sometime just before dark because he still had his milking to do. That was the way he got their milk, by having a milk cow or two. He still had his chores to do after he got through cooking syrup.

Thinking back on those days, that syrup, somehow or another, just seemed to be better than the syrup you buy today. It sure did taste good. When I was eleven or twelve years old, I started getting into hunting. My dad started me out squirrel hunting and then we kind of got into deer hunting. We hunted up at a place called Mashulaville up in Noxubee County. We had this tract of land that we hunted on, a kind of a little club there called Alford's Hunting Club. It's got some characters in, as every club has, that do things in kind of an unorthodox manner.

I remember one time me and another young guy, I guess we were somewhere around sixteen or seventeen, or we might not have been but fifteen, but, somehow or another, we were elected to drive [the deer] most of the time. All of the older men would go and get out on their stands and us young guys would turn the dogs out and we'd go through the woods whooping and hollering, trying to stir the deer up.

Ricky Lofton and I got elected to drive one morning. It was a real, real warm morning and everybody wore short sleeved shirts when they left to get in their deer stands. Me and Ricky went over to the highway and turned out the dogs about 7:00 o'clock. It was about a two and a half mile walk through the woods over to where the stands were. We had two or three good races that morning so it must have been about 11:30 by the time we got over there where the deer stands were. Somehow or another, we walked right out on Hubert Fulton's stand.

Now, Hubert had an old 12-gauge shotgun. You could stand on the side of a big barn about 40 or 50 yards away from it, shoot that old shotgun, and it would scatter buckshot from one end of the barn to the other. And I guess the man that put everybody out on stands knew that, and he put Hubert on a stand where brush grew so thick you couldn't see 15 feet into the woods. Soon after he left Hubert, a 7-point buck came tiptoeing out through there. Hubert saw it and cut down on him and, somehow or another, killed the deer with that old gun.

Hubert and all his brothers were bad to stutter, or at least two of his brothers stuttered bad. Their dad stuttered. We walked up to Hubert's stand and found him grinning from ear to ear. At that time we didn't realize that he had killed anything. He was just standing there and one of us asked what he was grinning about.

"W-well, I-I-I got one out t-there," he said.

"What'd you get, Hubert?"

"I g-got, I got me a sss-seven-pointer."

We walked on out through the bushes to where the dead deer was at and saw it wasn't field-dressed. It was a fine kill and it was nearly noon and some kind of hot, so Rick and I got our deer knives out and started to take care of it so it wouldn't spoil.

I said, "Hubert, how in the world did you kill this deer out in this thick woods with that old scatter-gun?"

He said, "I-I-I-I just s-shot the p-p-p-piss outer 'em!"

As I got older I was assigned a stand. One day we were walking down the fire road to our stands. Mr. Barge, out of Louisville, owned all that land up there. He owned a lot of land in Noxubee County, and that's whose land we were hunting on. We had permission to hunt on it. So, this morning we were walking down Mr. Barge's fire lane road because he had gates up and wouldn't let us drive down it. It was made strictly for fire control and he didn't want our tires tearing it up.

We'd stand along this road wherever the older people, the older hunters, thought that we needed to be standing. He had stationed Hubert Fulton in his spot and we left to walk on down the road to ours. The fire road led up a steep hill and about the time we topped it and started down, Hubert cuts loose.

Blam! Blam! Blam! Blam! Hubert shoots about four times and buckshot goes to ringing and zinging over our heads and tree branches start falling. My uncle, walking in front of us, hit the ground and scrambled toward the

“Hit the ground, boys, hit the ground! He's goin' to kill us, goin' kill us all!” He hollered.

Now, Hubert, when that deer hit the road between us and him, he didn't know but one thing to do, and that was shoot at it. He didn't even think twice. And on top of that, after scaring off several years of our lives, he still missed the deer -- didn't even touch it! We were happy to have escaped without anybody getting hurt.

I had another uncle in camp, Uncle Roy Martin, that got up every morning and cooked eggs and bacon for everybody in camp -- and fixed biscuits. He was kind of the camp cook, although nobody had designated him that. Things hadn't been going right all week for him.

He got up one morning and cooked about three dozen eggs and two pounds of bacon or more, and he thought everybody had already eat. He always waited till he made sure everybody had ate before he fixed his own. He fried himself up a couple of eggs and two or three strips of bacon and set it on the back of the stove while he went to fix himself some coffee. He was done pretty well aggravated because nobody had offered to come in there and help him that morning, do any of it. He turned back around to get his eggs and bacon and, Lo and behold! , somebody else had done got his food! It kind of ticked him off. He wasn't real happy about that at all, but he went ahead and fixed himself some more and sat down and ate.

We went on to the woods and some of us had got on our stand but Uncle Roy was still waiting, standing there with his legs spread out like he usually does, while Roy McLain, another of my cousins, loaded up his shotgun. It was an old Remington model and every very once in a while that sucker would go off when you was loading it. They were telling Cudd'n Roy where they were going to put him while Uncle Roy stood there waiting his turn to hear where they were going to station him. Uncle Roy was still a little miffed because someone had ate up his eggs that morning.

Old Roy McLain, my cousin, went to put a shell in the chamber of his old Remington and when he let go the receiver, when the shell went home, the gun went off and blowed about a eight-inch hole right between Uncle Roy's legs. Uncle Roy packed his stuff up and went home, and he ain't never went back to that deer camp no more. He felt like the time had come for him to change scenery.

Another man in camp was Mr. Harmon Seales, probably the best hunter in the camp. He usually killed more deer than most two or three of us could in a year. One day we went down the fire lane to hunt on Mr. Barge's land. Mr. Harmon was the last stand and I was next to him. My dad's stand was on back toward the cars from us.

Harmon had went on in there and killed a deer that morning and he came back up where I was at and wanted to know if he could borrow my knife. He'd left his knife at the camp.

So I gave him my knife and he asked me, "How many people y'all got riding

with you in your car, you and your dad?"

I said, "It's just the two of us." He said, "Well, do you think there's any way that I could ride back to the camp with y'all?" Said, "I mean if you've got a car load, I'll ride back on the hood, or I'll ride on the truck back to camp."

Now it was about seven or eight miles back to camp from where he had to park our cars. I said, "Mr. Harmon, what's a matter? You know it ain't no problem with you riding with us."

"Well," he said, "I rode over here with Hubert." Hubert was in his son's Pontiac. It was a big old '63 model, I think it was, or a '62 model. Mr. Harmon said they all got in the car, that big old car, and laid their guns up on the back seat back there. Said they got in it and shut the doors and Hubert started off backwards. They went to hollering at Hubert to stop but he didn't stop until he hit our camp president's truck, Mr. Tom Alford's pickup, and that stopped him. And Mr. Harmon said that Hubert said, "S-Shoot, I-I-I ain't g-got no br-r-akes." Mr. Harmon said Hubert didn't give nobody time to get out, just throwed that thing down in drive and took off.

You have to leave the camp and go down a little paved road about three miles and hit Highway 14 that runs from Louisville to Macon, turn east on it about four miles before you turn off to get to the woods where we hunted.

"Hubert was just floating down that Highway," Mr. Harmon said. "All at once Hubert's son let out a squall and said, 'Daddy, we gotta turn right here!'"

"Now, we had just come from where Hubert liked to have run over the camp president's pickup truck 'cause he didn't have no brakes but when his boy went to hollering we had to turn, three automatic shotguns and two pumps hit me right back of the head when Hubert throwed them brakes on. I'll ride anywhere with anybody, just as long as I don't have to get back in the car with Hubert."

When I was a kid we had to walk everywhere we went. If we wanted to go fishing we walked to our fishing hole. After we left my Uncle T.J. Barrier's house, Bogue Chitta Creek was the first thing you got to, a mile and a half from where he lived. The Pearl River was something like a half to three quarters of a mile on across the swamp from Bogue Chitta Creek.

For bait we'd go seine for minnows or dig for worms and catch crickets. There wasn't any thought about running up to the bait shop to buy bait. We'd seine it or catch it and then take our little hike to either the creek or the river, wherever we were going to fish. If you done that, you'd pretty well spent the day over there, sliding up and down the bank fishing, making a full day of it.

I remember my first spinning reel, a little old Zebco spinning reel, and we bought some worms to fish with, artificial worms. Yeah, I don't think I've seen any like them in the last twenty years. They had come out with some plastic worms, had red and black polka dots on them. Most were yellow or black, had a few white ones. They had a spinner in front of them and they already had hooks in them. That was one of the first lures I ever fished with. That and maybe a Devil's Horse. Then Snagless Sallies came along which was a spinner bait. Course, these type lures had probably been around for years, we just didn't know about them. Nobody around here fished with them. A few people got into fly-fishing, but you still had to walk to wherever you were going to fish, and you didn't have a very long cast because the river nor the creek was very wide. If you got lucky you'd run up on a bream bed that hadn't been disturbed and you'd catch a pretty fair mess of fish out of it.

About six out of ten times when you got there an old man from the neighborhood, actually a distant cousin of mine whose name was Ned Copeland but everybody called him Uncle Ned, would already be over there fishing. He didn't fish the way most people fished. When he came to the creek he waded right out to the middle and walked right down the creek or up the creek, whichever way he wanted to walk, fishing right down through the middle. No need to fish

behind him cause he'd done stirred it all up. And he never would, he never did wear shoes, most of the time he didn't wear a shirt.

In early summer when mosquitoes were bad and we'd go over there, we'd take a can of Off or a can of 6-12, and we'd just about have to use the whole can if we fished a couple of hours, to keep mosquitoes off us. Uncle Ned didn't use nothing. We'd go up to him and say, "Uncle Ned, we're fixing to go back to the house. These mosquitoes are eating us up." He'd look around and say, "What mosquitoes?" They didn't ever bother him.

His old feet were so tough till -- I know this sounds like a big tale, but I've actually seen him stomp cotton-mouthed moccasins with his bare heel and kill them. He didn't flake. When he seen one, they was just a dead snake. Most of the time he done it with his bare foot.

I got a cousin whose brother-in-law lived with him and his wife for several years, name was Hubbard May. Now Hubbard, he had a unique style of fishing, too. If he hung his hook and had to break it off he'd put on another one, but don't let him hang it and break it again, 'cause you didn't get to fish in that hole no more that day. He either throwed a chunk in the water or, in a big portion of the time he'd throw his reel in. He'd get mad at it and say it was messing up. It'd be a brand new one but if Hubbard hung his hook a couple of times he'd throw it away. Usually some of us younger boys had to go in and fish his reel out for him. Go swimming and get it out.

We'd get it out and he'd be stomping up and down the creek bank, raring, cussin' , raising sand, and then he would say, "Well, give it back to me, let me try it one more time."

He might get to fish the rest of the day with it, sometimes he wouldn't. I have seen him throw his reel in the creek four different times and Ronald Joe Copeland would go get it. The fourth time Ronald come out with it he told him, "Now, Hubbard, if that reel goes back in the water one more time and I go get it, it's mine. You ain't gettin' it back no more." Hubbard would kind of settle down a bit, until we started home.

Hubbard had an old '54 Ford truck that we'd go to creek in sometimes, if he was around and not off hoeing cotton or picking cotton for somebody, or maybe even plowing. If he was around, he'd take us. I don't know why he fooled with us boys the way he did. Ronald Joe and my brother Keith could aggravate that poor man more than anybody you ever saw.

It wasn't nothing but a pig trail from Uncle T.J.'s all the way down to the creek, deep old holes in the road that you had to try to navigate around or bounce through. We'd start back from the creek in Hubbard's old pickup with Keith or Ronald Joe, or all of us, riding in the back. Keith or Ronald Joe would reach up through the window and pull Hubbard's hat down over his eyes so he couldn't see, or grab his hat and take of with it. When that happened he would stop the vehicle and take off on foot after one or the other. He'd chase them till he thought they was far enough away that they couldn't get back to the truck, then he'd run back and jump in and try to drive off and leave them and make them walk out. Before he could get good started, the other would reach in to grab that hat.

It'd take sometimes 35 or 40 minutes to go that mile and a half from the creek to the house. Hubbard would get so mad he'd threaten to kill all of us, but then the next day when he got ready to go fishing, he'd go round us all up and take us fishing again. It was a lot of fun, but I know we probably sent that man to an early grave just from aggravating him.

Today we don't walk to the creek any more. We don't seine for bait or turn boards over looking for night-crawlers and crickets. We run up to the Quick-Stop where they dip out some store-bought minnows, and go down to the Sportsman Shop and buy nice reels and lures, and we put them in a nice bass boat or a good john boat and ride in our car right up to the river bank to back our boat in the river so we can go fishing. Nowadays, if kids had to walk the way we did just to go fishing, or walk to get to where we were going to fish, they'd probably give up the sport. It would become a lost art.

TWO INTERVIEWS ABOUT “HUNTIN” AND “FISHIN”



Taped Interview # 1: February 24, 1989.

Interviewer: Tony Skinner

Interviewee: Jerry Marlow

4419 38th Avenue

Meridian, Mississippi

Location: Meridian Community College

D.O.B.: February 27, 1943

I like to hunt rabbits better than any other type hunting because you hunt with dogs and beagles, and you get to hear them. I like to hear dogs run. You can hunt rabbits longer than any other hunting you can do. I like to walk around, usually with someone, and watch how a rabbit tries to evade the dogs when it comes to a river or a creek. Also, like the dogs go on the other side of the creek or river after they lose the rabbit. It's just the fun of watching the dog work, hearing different types of dogs run and the different types of barks they have, watching them work a thicket or something, and watching the rabbit, how it goes and then comes back to cross its own path, trying to mess the dogs up. There is a lot involved in rabbit hunting. That's why I like it most.

Back in Tennessee, when I rabbit hunted, you'd hunt in the hills, but in Mississippi, in this area, you hunt swamp rabbits. In swampy areas you call rabbits 'cane cutters', huge rabbits that hang around swamps where a lot of water stands. That is probably for their own protection where they can lose a dog. A dog trails a rabbit by scent so if the a rabbit runs through the water the dog loses their trail. Cane cutters are the big rabbits that live near swampy water, while smaller hillbilly rabbits live on hillsides in brush tops, sage fields, and places like that. I enjoy hunting the bigger swamp rabbits the most.

When I was in high school in Tennessee, we hunted in the mountains where hillbilly rabbits ran. We didn't have many cane cutters where I was, so most of them I hunted for then were smaller. I enjoy hunting better in Mississippi where I hunt in Lauderdale County, and in Kemper and Clarke Counties, too.

Basically, we just skin a rabbit we plan to eat. It's not real hard. Just cut their hide down to their skin and then pull it off like shucking off a sweater, and then gut them out. You can cook them any way. You can barbecue them on a grill, or you can bake them. You fix them just like chicken. If you've ever cooked chicken, it's the same way with rabbit. You can fry them, roll them in flour and fry them. Any way you like chicken, you can fix rabbit. The meat is real white.

My boys and I belong to Ray Eubanks' hunting camp up at Lauderdale. It's a deer camp and I don't go there a lot, but I've been up with my boys four or five times on Saturdays to hunt with them. I enjoy the companionship. Everybody sits around camp and tells hunting stories. Then everybody walks off through the woods to hunt deer and then comes back to tell about the big ones they missed. It involves a whole lot of waiting but not a lot of action as does rabbit hunting.

To hunt rabbit I use a double-barrel 410 shotgun. I use a shotgun versus a rifle, because it stands to reason tat a rabbit, with dogs running it, is always running. You seldom get a rabbit that is sitting still so you hunt with a shotgun. Some people use a 12-gauge, which is a bigger gun than a 410. A 410 is a small shell that doesn't tear the rabbit up. If you're going to eat a rabbit, you don't want to tear it up too bad.

You don't have to worry about messing the head up as few people mount a rabbit like they do deer heads, unless of course it is a Texas Jack-rabbit with horns on it like Texans have shown

in pictures. You don't mount squirrels, either, unless you kill a extra large fox squirrel or something like that. I hunt for meat when I hunt rabbit. I don't hunt for trophies.

I used to do quite a bit of squirrel hunting. You can squirrel hunt with or without a dog. Still hunting, when the season first opens and the leaves are on, you can get out and sit under -- I like that -- because you get out in the early morning and sit under a couple of oak trees and wait for the squirrels to wake up. Later when the leaves fall off, you take a dog and hunt with them. That's a lot of fun where a dog picks up the trail of a squirrel and follows it to a tree. When the squirrel gets so high on the tree, the dog just sits there and barks. You just go to the dog and look up and there's sits a squirrel. You don't hunt squirrels with a shotgun, not when hunting with a dog. You aim for his eye with a rifle.

I have also enjoyed quail hunting here in Mississippi. You hunt quail with a dog, a dog that goes out and picks up the trail of a covey and points them. He'll flush them out so you can shoot them on the fly. It's got to where birds are so scattered that you very seldom get up a big covey. After you get a covey up they'll fly and then light and, instead of grouping back, they'll take off running and a good hunter doesn't shoot birds on the ground. They are so scarce it is difficult to kill any birds. I don't know if the foxes caught them or what. Mainly, rabbit hunting and squirrel hunting are the two types of hunting I've done.

One of these days I'd like to go to Texas and hunt the big jack rabbit. They say they are big as dogs. I don't know about that, now, but it would be fun to go out there. I saw one once that a fellow had killed. They are huge, jack rabbits are.

I find enjoyment in just getting out into nature, getting out into the woods in the fall of the year when the season opens and on until it closes just prior to summer. Down in the woods in the fall it's nice when it's cool like it is this morning. Everybody is outside and the dogs are running and rabbits are running everywhere and the squirrels -- well, it's the companionship and being out with nature. Rabbit hunting takes you where you don't stand still and freeze to death like you do with deer hunting. You are on the move with rabbit hunting and that's why I enjoy it.

You get a couple of friends, like for instance, I used to hunt with this guy, hunted every Monday and Tuesday. He had some beagles and I did, too, and we'd just get together to hunt. Anybody that wanted to came along. With rabbit hunting you are sort of together. With deer hunting you are out on a stand all by yourself. You can't talk but have to be quiet while you deer hunt. When you're alone when still hunting for squirrels you have to be quiet, but when rabbit hunting with a group or with a friend you can talk and make all the noise you want.

My wife's not a hunter. She's not an outdoors man. My two sons, Steve and Mike, love to hunt. They probably deer hunt more than anything else. They like deer hunting. I'm not too crazy about it, but it gives us a closeness. Really, you learn a lot about individuals when you are out hunting, you see how they enjoy it, the enjoyment of being outside that brings happiness.

Taped interview # 2: February 27, 1989.

Interviewer: Tony Skinner

Interviewee: Kevin Earl

Location: 1704 Willow Bend Drive
Meridian, Mississippi

D.O.B.: November 19, 1947

I like a lot of kinds of hunting, but I guess squirrel hunting is my favorite. Squirrels hardly ever sit or stand still but move around a lot and make a moving target. I'd say squirrel hunting is my favorite kind of hunting.

I used to live in Michigan but moved to Meridian about fifteen years ago. I started hunting squirrels here about ten years ago. 'Course, I had hunted squirrels before in Michigan. It is nice up there. I mean, it was cold but squirrels come out when it is cold.

Here, I do most of my squirrel hunting up at Lauderdale. I usually carry two guns with me, a .22 rifle with a scope, and a 12-gauge shotgun. I carry one around with me and leave the other in the car. I like to use the .22 best because it makes hunting harder and more of a hunt than it is if you use a shotgun. With a shotgun you just blow them out of the sky, but with a .22 it's more of a skill --you've got to aim better and it gives the squirrel more of a sporting chance. The rifle is small, lightweight, and is simple to use.

With my shotgun I use a four or six shot, sometimes. Occasionally, whenever I feel radical or I feel kind of loose, I use a .00 buckshot. Usually, with buckshot, you don't plan to eat the squirrel.

I've done rabbit and squirrel hunting, and have done deer hunting, as well. The fall season is usually a good season to go squirrel hunting in. Winter is all right, too, but fall is usually the best. Out squirrel hunting you don't get cold because you walk around a lot and shake a lot of vines, you move about and look in a lot of nests. I mean, it's not like deer hunting where you just stand in a deer stand or stand on the ground. You walk around and it keeps you warm when you are squirrel hunting. It keeps your body juices flowing and everything like that.

I usually take four people with me, not counting myself. Two walk in front and look around, scope the area out, look for nests and vines and all that. The other three walk behind with guns and try to get the squirrels. The two up front try to shake them out and the ones behind try to get them with guns. We take turns walking in front or in behind. Everybody carries a gun so the walkers have a chance to shoot squirrels, too.

I'll tell you a hunting story. There were three of us hunting up in Michigan where they have big black squirrels. We came to a nest hanging in a tall pine tree that had a couple of vines hanging off it. I told one of the guys to go up and shake those vines. He said no, let's go, I'm getting kind of tired. But I said, no, this one will be the last one we do. We were coming out of the woods when we spied it, so he said okay, this will be the last one we do. He went up there and shook it and nothing happened. We waited a couple of minutes to see what was going on, and when we saw nothing was coming out, he shook it again and these two big black squirrels busted out of there barking like they do, and I said, oh, my God, look at them!

I got one of them and one of my friends got the other one. I thought mine was big, but when we went to pick his up, his was almost twice as big as mine was. Mine weighed about four pounds, which is quite large for a squirrel, but I tell you what, my friend's squirrel, his squirrel weighed six and a half pounds! Now, that was a huge squirrel!

Mine, mine was about eighteen inches long, which is pretty long. But his squirrel, his squirrel was about twenty-four inches long from head to tail. From the end of the head to the end of the tail, it was pretty-near twenty-four inches long. He mounted his squirrel, which I would

have done had I shot it, but I just ate mine. It was good! You know, squirrel is one of the best eating animals you can kill.

I deer hunt, but it's not my favorite. Like I said, squirrel hunting is my favorite kind of hunting. I haven't killed any big deer in Mississippi, but I've killed some pretty nice sized ones in Michigan. By nice sized deer I mean one with about twelve or fourteen points. It gets pretty cold in Michigan in the winter. When you deer hunt you wear a lot of clothes to keep warm. You gotta keep warm.

I love fishing about as much as I do hunting squirrels. Almost. I fish around here in Lauderdale, Kemper, and Neshoba counties, all around here. My favorite place to fish is on little bitty farm ponds, out in the country. In Kemper County they have a lot of little bitty ponds, private ponds ... You can sneak in on one every once in a while. There's a lot of good ponds in Kemper County you can sneak on and reel you out two or three bass anytime up there. They have a lot of ponds up there.

Biggest bass I ever caught was about 7 ½ pounds, I caught it on buzz bait. Buzz bait is a fishing lure that you tie onto the end of your line and it runs across the top of the water and makes a noise the bass can't stay away from. It's an irresistible noise that bass just can't pass up, they got to attack it. Once they attack it, the bass is yours.

I like to use worms, plastic worms, they are real good. I like to use spinner bait. I like to use impalas, broken-back impalas. Impalas give the illusion of an injured minnow that's fixing to die. He's moving all around and he's just saying to the bass, eat me, eat me.

My favorite fish story happened in Lauderdale County. Me and Tommy, with Jeremy and David, went back there fishing on his private land. It was a bright sunshiny day and we had everything we needed; plenty of equipment and a cooler of drinks with us. We had been there about a half hour and had caught some little bass. Well, not too little, they would weigh about a pound and a half. We kept a couple of them and threw some of them back.

The pond was more shallow in the middle and deeper around the banks. I kind of waded out to the shallow part and was standing on an old stump fishing with a broken-back lure. My friends on the bank were using plastic worms. David, all of a sudden, yells, "God, I've got one!"

I looked over there in time to see the water erupt when he hooked it, a big bass. It was so big the water just exploded in the air. Me and the others all ran to where he was, shouting for him to reel it on in. He got it in, it took him a while but he got it in. Then we found we had forgotten one of the most important things you take when you go bass fishing. We forgot to bring along a fish stringer. None of us had one.

It was devastating. We didn't know what to do. The smaller fish we caught we just threw them on the bank because we were going to clean and eat them, but David wanted to mount the big bass so it needed to be kept in fresh water and wouldn't die.

Well, we had some extra fishing line. It sounds crazy, but it was the only thing we had, so we put the line through his bass's mouth, I don't know how many times, and tied it to a stump and put it in the water, hoping the line would hold.

We fished another hour or so, I'd say. We hooked some nice ones but nothing, not near nothing like that one. It was about an eight or nine pound fish. A very big bass. When we got ready to go I looked down and said, "David, come over here." He looked over and said, "Why?" He was still smiling and still acting like he was Bill Dance and all that, because he had hooked that big bass. I picked up the empty line and said, "Your big bass is gone." His tongue dropped to the floor. It was pretty bad, a pretty bad sight. It was agonizing just to see him.

Another time me and my friend David were out on the town with some of my friends who were visiting from Michigan. They were down here for a whole week so we were out on the town, getting down, feeling pretty good, and everything like that. One of my friends said, Kevin,

do you do much fishing? I said yeah, we do, we do a lot of fishing down here. So he wanted to go that night. I said do you want to go fishing right now? He said, yeah.

We took a vote and they all wanted to go so we had to go. We went over to this place in Alabama I knew of, where we had to sneak in. I had been there before with the owner. I knew the guy and he told me that he didn't allow anyone to go there without him. I had done fairly well that day, when I went fishing with him. I caught a lot of bass, and there were a lot of catfish in the pond, too.

Well, that night we snuck in. It was off the interstate, off I-59/20, and we snuck in to catch some of his catfish. We had our poles and everything we needed to catch catfish, chicken livers from the store for bait and night crawlers, too, big large night crawlers.

We had been fishing there a while and we were doing pretty good. We were catching a few but nothing to brag about, nothing to bring home to the wife to say, "Look what I caught!" But we were still having a good time and we had stayed about two hours when we started to pack up and go because it was getting towards daybreak.

We were almost packed up when we heard this noise back in the woods behind us. We didn't think anything about it and continued to get our stuff collected when he heard it again. We thought to ourselves, that's nothing, that's just maybe a cow or a raccoon back there walking around, stomping around, doing whatever it does back there. Then it done it again, only closer this time. We all had flashlights and we turned around to look. We didn't have a gun with us. We had knives but no guns. When we turned around to look with flashlights some thing started running through the bushes, sounded like it was running at us. We couldn't tell what it was.

I'm not going to say we were scared, but we were kind of nervous, not knowing what it was out there in the dark like that. When it was about 75 yards away our flashlights shined some eyes staring at us. There were four sets of eyes staring at us. They were low to the ground, about 14 or 16 inches off the ground.

Then the eyes started charging at us and I said, "Oh, my God, we're in trouble, guys!"

It was crazy, but we all jumped into the water. Would you believe it? We all jumped into the water ... I don't know if we were so scared that a bear was going to eat us, I don't know, but we just jumped in the water instead of dashing to the highway. We just jumped in where we had to tread water for a good while.

Our beast turned out to be a pack of wild dogs. They had heard us come in, I guess, and had waited out there long enough until they were willing to charge. We treaded water for about a half hour and during that time we were in the water the dogs were walking all around the edge, just walking around the edge. We outlasted them and got out when the dogs finally left.

I tell you, it was scary. We grabbed out stuff and hauled our butts out of there, fast. We didn't take time to get our string of catfish, we were so nervous that the dogs would come back. I have to admit I was pretty scared that time. I haven't been back there since, no I haven't. I wouldn't trust my luck there another time.

I've wondered if the owner found our string of catfish. I'll never go back to find out. I'm sure of that!

[A word of caution: One would hope that Mr. Earl and his friends learned something. Perhaps the pond owner put the dogs there to keep poachers away from his pond. Pond owners can be quite unfriendly when someone steals the fish that they bought to stock their private lake. After stocking and feeding their fish it can be dangerous for some city slicker to trespass on a land-owner's private land to hunt or fish. Thieves have been known to become the hunted instead of being the hunter when private property is involved. It is not only illegal, but

dangerous to poach on other people's land without written permission and a valid Mississippi hunting and fishing license. -M.E.W., Editor]

VI. BLACK HISTORY



LIFE & TIMES OF A SHARECROPPER'S CHILD



Taped Interview: February 26, 1989.

Interviewer: Robin Coleman, daughter of Interviewee.

Interviewee: Mrs. Mable Windham Campbell D.O.B.: July 13, 1929

Location: 713 30th Street

Meridian, Miss. 39301

D.O.B.: July 13, 1929

I was born Mable Windham in Preston, Mississippi, in Kemper County and grew up in the country some ways from Meridian. I started to school when I was six. I had to care for my younger sisters and brothers, but I always went to school. There were eleven of us in all, and well, I worked in the field when I was, maybe, ten years old.

I didn't make hardly any money working in the field. It was very little, I'll have to say that. We were sharecroppers and wages was very low. A sharecropper mostly works on halves; if you live with somebody, farm his land, then whatever you make, you take half of it and he takes the other half. You share half of whatever you raise with somebody else.

I think life was -- well, I think it was more honest then than it is now, 'cause peoples had a different attitude than what they do now. Most families was poor and struggled to get along, but they was more together and shared their troubles when times were rough.

We raised cotton, corn, potatoes and cane. We made syrup from our cane. Yeah, we certainly did. And we raised hogs and cows. I milked the cows in the morning before school and again at night. And I helped wash, I did the washing when we didn't have water running out of faucets; we carried water a good piece from a spring.

School was all right I guess -- we had a long way to walk, 'specially if it was cold and raining. We was only in school for six months. We only went six months so we could work in the fields when spring planting time started.

There was a lot of kids in the neighborhood, in some houses. We'd play with them when we could, but it ain't like children playing now, just go to somebody's house every day and play. We played at home with one another between doing our jobs. Sometimes we'd go play with our neighbors, but mostly we played at home in our yard. We made our own toys. We'd make tom-walkers, take long sticks and nail on blocks of wood in the places we'd put our feet. Somebody would get on and put their feet on there and walk around so tall!

Yeah, we'd walk around like that, and we had a game we played with a tire, an old car tire. And we'd get out there and catch toad-frogs and make a frog-houses in the sand. We just make up a -- just get a pile of dirt and hump it up to make little [frog] houses. We would play with our cat. Things like that. We enjoyed it, too. We might try to rig us up a little wagon, or something like that, if we could find some wheels. [Laughter] We played. Well, I did have a dog once but he run off.

We just all played together. We would go out in the woods and would swing on the vines. We played out there together, but mostly we played ring games in the yard, and things like that.

One Christmas I got a doll, but I left my doll in the rain and that was the last of my doll. It got wet and that stuff couldn't get wet. It crumbled up. I don't know what it was made of, but its face just crumbled up. It had hair. It didn't have no long hair, but it did have hair.

I was eighteen when I left home. I stayed with my cousin, Earline, but I fed myself. My first job was at Alden Knitting Mills where I worked as a looper. I looped socks for 40 cents an hour. That was back in '45. I told you we didn't make much money back then -- I brought home about sixteen dollars.

We ate about the same kind of food as we do now, like that fried chicken we had tonight, about as much as you can cook in a big skillet on the big burner. You could take \$5 and buy as

much as people you see now with food stamps, stuff all piled up in the grocery cart. We could buy a lot for \$5. Sugar and cornmeal, stuff like that, you could get for like a dime. You didn't buy things in a bag, but you'd just get a dollar's worth, or however much you wanted. You could get a twenty-five cent piece of meat, he'd just cut you a piece of meat, something like that. You could probably take a dime or fifteen cents and buy a meal.

I don't remember paying any grocery store tax. I know back then we had these tokens we spent with money. (I still had one around here, somewhere.) They would give them to you -- you'd have to have them to spend your money. You had to buy your tokens, they was just like tax. You could buy them or they'd give them to you as tokens along with your change.

[One penny bought ten tokens. At that time there was a tenth of a penny sales tax on every 5¢ purchase. The cost of one 5¢ Coca-Cola was one nickel and one token. --Editor]

We walked most everywhere back then. Horse and buggies were going out, but lots of times farmers rode to church in farm wagons drawn by plow mules. Or cars. We begin to have cars. Some people had cars.

Let's see, I don't know which President was in office back then. Was it Hoover? Was he ever a President? We [Black people] didn't vote back then. They was newspapers and stuff when I was a child, but we didn't get no paper. The only paper we got was --[Inaudible].

You know, when they first tried to let Negroes vote, these soldiers [World War II veterans], they give them a chance to vote first, and they had to pay. Yeah, had to pay a \$2 poll tax. When they started to let black people vote, you know, you had to be able to read and comprehend, and be able to explain what was going on before you could vote. There was very few older people that could read, so they stopped that. You don't even have to pay no poll tax, now.

I don't really know how many voted back then because I didn't go vote. I just started that when Martin Luther King started fighting for that civil rights thing. We can all vote now. That's true.

We had radios and stuff like that, but TV just come along in the 1950's, I think. They had it in stores where we'd go to look in the windows to see things on TV. We got our first car -- an Oldsmobile -- in 1962. It cost six or seven hundred dollars. And then the price of gas started going up ... You almost had to be working at a factory to be able to get a car. You take your daddy, -- he was working for a contractor and didn't make much money. He probably made about -- I don't know, he might have made about \$5 a day.

I don't remember much else about growing up. I remember playing in a chair once when it fell over backwards. It wasn't a rocker but a straight chair. My feets, I reckon, wasn't long enough to [Inaudible]. I went back too far. The chair [Ends laughing].

**COMMENTS FOLLOWING
THE MOVIE
*MISSISSIPPI BURNING***



Taped interview: February 16, 1989.
Interviewer: William M. Brown
Interviewee: Oliver "Johnny" Goforth
Location: Route 2, Box 247
 Little Rock, Mississippi
D.O.B.: September 19, 1909

I was 75 years old the 7th day of last September. I have lived here in Newton County all by life, three quarters of a century. I was born and raised about 100 yards from here in an old house they have torn away. Philadelphia, Mississippi is in Neshoba County just above here.

We've been talking about the Philadelphia movie, *Mississippi Burning*, that's so controversial. People say it's bringing 'bad news' to Mississippi.

Yeah, they claimed they buried them [the murdered civil rights activists] in that levee up there, but the boy that dug in there, he said he didn't see a thing in the world. He was running the dragline and he couldn't see a thing when they stopped him and made him get off and leave. He said they said they got something out of there and toted it off in plastic bags. Course, they showed that on television, you know, where they were toting out plastic bags, but he said he didn't see a thing in the world he dug up but they made him get off and leave.

And this old lady -- this Nicholson fellow that dug my well out here, he said that old lady said that if they buried anybody in there, she didn't know nothing about it and she lived right there. She said she didn't sleep much at night and she's there every day at home. She didn't believe they buried nobody there. But, anyway, they claimed they got somebody.

I ain't never believed myself that they ever got a body, that there's ever anybody killed. It might have been. I just think that it was a sham. I think it was just like Dale Bianca got me one day and interviewed me out there and one of them had a little 'ole tape recorder box about so big sittin' on his lap, and another one asked me about niggers. They burnt the nigger church over here and they thought the Klan done it.

They asked did I think the Klan done it and I said, "Nope, I shore don't."

They said, "Well, why?"

I said, "well, there's a nigger over there -- I well know all them niggers back over in there -- and one of them niggers told me that they moved the piano up to his house the evening before the church burnt up that night. How come them to move the piano out if the Klan burnt it? The niggers wasn't supposed to have knowed anything about it if the Klan was gonna burn it. I say the niggers burnt the church themselves."

I never did hear no more from them after that. They never come back and ask me no more questions about it.

Yeah, there's just a lotta of such stuff as that went on that they accused the Klan of doin'. I don't know -- the Klan mighta done it, but it always looked strange to me. Why'd the Klan go over there to Meridian to get somebody to do the work up there at Philadelphia? Why didn't they catch somebody that didn't know nothin' about that -- like my nephew they got and sent to the penitentiary? The folks up there didn't even know him, I don't suppose. And then they got that other boy that they sent the same time he did. don't figure they ever knowed anything about him, but what got him ... well, it just looks strange to me. If I was gonna kill somebody I'd get somebody I really knowed and had confidence in that would do the thing and keep his mouth shut. I wouldn't go and get some feller off down yonder that I didn't know nothin' about -- he'd liable to tell everybody that he done it. It just don't make sense. I don't know. There was some sorta slack work goin' on. I don't know why they done such as that, anyhow. It mighta happened, they mighta killed 'em, but I ain't ever believed they did.

The Klan was alive along then but they wasn't doing anything, you know, anything out of the way that I knew anything about. They didn't bother nobody. Just like the Klans going on now. You know, like they gonna march over there in Meridian and over here in Philadelphia. Well, the niggers march, why not the Klan, or other organizations that get out there and marches. As long as they are behaving themselves and wanta walk down the streets, they got as much right as the niggers has, the way I look at it. The niggers, to me -- you give them one thang and they want more. And just like it is, that killing that nigger down there in Meridian. Well, durn, he jumped on the police there. Hell, he [the policeman] didn't have no other choice, I didn't think. Look how they killed that there policewoman down there -- they killed her. Well, the niggers didn't buck up or nothin' about that. I don't see that.

I tell you, it wouldn't do for me to be the law. I'd plug 'em. I believe in giving the nigger his place, his right, but I don't believe in giving the nigger his rights and mine, too. There's a lot of stuff going on that don't allow the South a fair chance, a fair show.

The Klan hasn't marched in a couple years until this movie came along. I think they marched in Forest and in another place, don't remember which it was. But they marched in two different places. I don't see it's worth a cent. Just like the niggers marching and gettin' out there and blocking the white stores. You've heered of that. I don't know that they's doin' any good -- I'd go around if I wanted to go in the store and trade or whatever.

But time changes and ever'thang. I used to hear my daddy talk about the Klan that was around 'way back before I was born. The Klan, back in those days, would whope [whip] folks ' sometimes that didn't live. Course, they didn't only whope niggers they'd whope a white feller if he didn't take care of his family and do like he ought to do. We'd be a heap better off if some of 'em was whoped right now, the way they're doin' . I heered some of them talkin' last night about this welfare business.

Now, I believe in welfare., Tt's a good thing if it was used like it oughta be, but it's the most mistreated thing there is, and people just takes advantage of it. Just like. the niggers is; they get a better foothold, and a better foothold, a little privilege, and they just take more. Every time you give 'em something they just want more. That's the way welfare is.

A woman and man who lives over here not near as old as me and Eloise, and he's got cancer. They just found him with it a few days ago, done eat one of his lungs up and the other one near about gone. He can't breathe and they was sending him in the hospital there at Union and they carry him in a van ever day over to Meridian and help him give these treatments to where he can breathe. That's the onliest way he can breathe without just smothering to death, he ain't got no lungs. And- the, welfare is paying for it, our tax money and ever'thang, is paying for it. Course, his wife rode with Eloise and my niece down there, backwards and forwards ever day. They work at the factory and she was younger then either one of them, but-- --she won't work. She was drawing welfare. He was one eyed but he was able back then in them days, to work. He was able as I was, but he wouldn't work. His welfare was feeding them. Well. she would work a little, a day or two, and then she'd quit. She'd just quit. Now, the government, our state and our tax money is paying them, you see, taking care of him. I always thought, sech as that, I don't believe in it.

We have a couple right out here that's on welfare, one of my kinfolks live in this little ol' trailer right here, one of my niece's daughters. Won't work. I tried to hire 'em to pick butterbeans last year. Eloise would pick 'em when she come in from the factory. I couldn't pick beans. I could shell 'em and get 'em ready to put in the freezer, and things like that, and I could pick peas and other stuff like that, but I can't bend down and pick butterbeans. Eloise is 70 years old, still working, and I tried to hire this girl, and she ain't -- she's just in her twenties, told her I'd

pay her if she'd come and pick butterbeans for me. You believe she would? She just set out there on her cute pockets.

We didn't have no welfare back when I's growing up. I worked for 50 cents a day for years after I got big enough, where I was 12 or 13 years old. Me an' my nephew would swap work with one another. I'd saw firewood for old people he'd go get jobs with. You know, we burnt wood stoves, wood fireplaces, and people that was too old to get their own wood would hire us, you know, to saw it. I'd help him cut and he'd help me cut and we'd get 50 cents a day to saw and haul it and stack it up their stove wood and firewood, and stuff like that.

When we grown up, I guess I was 15 or 16 years old before there ever was anything like welfare, they wadn't nuthing. They just gave you commodities then, like peanut butter or cheese, and stuff like that. We never did fool with trying to get nothing like that. We always made our own living ... When I got a little older I got a job at a sawmill and worked. I never got nuthin' but an eight grade education. A body could live -- there warn It no such thing as 'cain't get a job' . You might not get the kind of job you want, but you could get a job.

When I was little there warn't no such a thing as jobs only on farms, like it was with me, you see. People knowed I was a good hand to work with my nephew and they would get us, you know, to work for them. I'd dig ditches, pull corn, pick cotton, chop cotton, and stuff like 'at. I'd work my farm and then work extra for them. I'd catch up with mine and then work a few hours along for other folks that needed, to make a little money, you know. I could live -- there warn't nobody raised no poorer than I was, and had no harder time than we did, 'cause we'd work.

Eloise would work at that factory and I'd work, after we married, at logging away from home -- didn't get in till nearly night. She'd gather stuff and get it ready and we'd fix it and put it in the freezer at night. Both of us held down two jobs. Sometimes I'd be making a lotta hours a day and maybe not have 30 or 40 minutes to plow before dark and she'd have the old horse hooked up and I'd jump out there and plow a few rows. Next evening I'd do the same thing, and raised our garden stuff and filled up the freezer and worked, too.

People are paying you now-a-days to work eight hours. We worked from daylight to dark, there wasn't so such thing as hour work. When Eloise first went to work at the factory she trained free at night, she didn't get no pay for that. When she done her trainin' and started drawing, she drew 35cents an hour. I heard her telling somebody the other day that she'd been there 52 years. She likes it, I reckon.

I pillage around home here, with the old cows and things, and make a few dollars that way. And fish and hunt. I love to hunt, I enjoy hunting. I help plant the gardens and work them. I ain't aiming to do too much. I f eel good all the time, but I got this arthritis in my hips and shoulders and I can't hardly get about good. If I walk very much I can't hardly get up and down.

Going back to the Klan -- they're more of a church oriented group, which can be a good thing. Course, you have some people that ought not to be in things like that. You take any organization you start, you'll get a bad fun in there along, just like in the Masons. You'll get one that won't do according to the rules. The Klan has rules and by-laws to go by, just like the Masons and things like that. The Klan was a good thing. It helped people. People would get down and need help and they'd help them. Course, you get bad 'uns in anything you start ...

The Klan's got a leader -- I forget what you call it now, but it's the head of it, and when you join that thing you got to take a pledge. What you do, you got to take an oath. You don't just go and tell them you want in without the whole bunch approves you, you know. If anybody comes and says you ain't fit and have something wrong, they won't let you in it. They try to get good people in there.

There's a lot of people [in the Klan] that knows each other, like I know everyone in this community for 5 or 6 miles around. I know everybody even further than 5 or 6 miles. It was a

good thing but the federal people got on it and stayed on it so heavy 'till the couldn't never do nothing much.

You just hear the bad about it, they don't tell the good 'cause the FBI, you know, are agin' it. The newsmens never tell nothing good that they did, it's all the bad stuff. If the truth was knowed, I don't know anything about it myself, only just what I heered.

They never knowed who done all the killings. They sent several men to the pen, but I think it was just a frame-up. They just acted cantankerous because they couldn't ...

You know how people is, get to drinkin' around these joints and get half drunk and mouth off that they had something to do with it when they didn't know nothin' about it. Course, the FBI got ahold it, and maybe a federal man heered of it. They just put 'em and tried 'em and sent 'em off to the penitentiary.

Somebody told me that they was working in Washington to convict somebody, not to let 'em get by with it. They hunted but couldn't find no bodies. They rode the country over and seined ponds and looked everywhere and they never could find no body. Well, it wouldn't do for the federal government not to do something, just completely lose a case. They was told to convict somebody, to come down here and convict these boys.

They got two, I know, down at Meridian. My nephew and another boy. I forgot now, it was a Snowden boy, I believe was his name, and I think maybe it was a Roberts.

I never did really know if they got anybody up at Philadelphia or not. They tried to get 'ol Rainey – he was the sheriff up there -- they tried to ring him into it, but he didn't know nothing about it. He was off at the coast with his wife and boy, and they wouldn't let his deputy see when they found the bodies. The deputy called the sheriff and said they wouldn't even let him go to the levy when they's gonna dig 'em out. He was the law, he shoul'da been allowed to went down there, look to me like, and a-seen what they dug out there. Naw, they didn't let nobody see what was dug out of there, the way I understood it. I seen it on television, time and again, them a-toting something out in a plastic bag. Nothin' was told about it, only what the FBI said.

It was a good long while, two or three months, before they ever found the bodies. That McDonald boy, he run the dragline that they sent out there. He worked with the company that owned them draglines. He said he watched that bucket ever-time he made a dig, he watched and he didn't see a thing in the world. He was sittin' up there where he could see right down where he was diggin' and he said he didn't see nuthin'. Then they told him to quit and takened him slam on away from there, wouldn't let him stay and see.

It was right after that nigger tried to push his way in at Oxford, you know, when the whites tried to keep 'em out of the schools. I don't know what they done, but these two white boys and this nigger, I guess, come from New York or Washington, or where ever it was. They's tryin' to intergrate, you know, on us, cafes and schools and things an' all. It's like I told some of 'um the other day, if the Lord ...

If the Good Lord would of aimed for the niggers to been mixed and everythang he'd a-painted 'em all the same color. I don't believe he ... He put 'em all separate. You take a squirrel. They're black squirrels and gray squirrels and they's red squirrels. And they don't mix. You take black birds won't mix with a blue bird and things like that. They won't mix.

That's the way I was raised. Whites, you know, they worked with niggers in our community. Like I say, they's bad 'uns any way you went - we had people that was mean to them. My daddy wadn't, and all the other people in our country, most all of them. We had 'ol bad 'uns, a few scattered around, that wanted to do something smart, like a bully, you know, like you find around the joints. But my daddy an' them, they got along with the niggers. Well, my daddy was friendly with the niggers back then. They worked for us just years and years when I was growing up, a little ol' kid. I played with their children. We wasn't big enough to work and

they'd bring their little kids and we'd get out here and play while their mama and daddy and the older children was workin' in the fields, pickin' cotton or choppin' cotton, or whatever. They worked a lot for us and others around here, that was the way with all of 'em. We got along good together.

Several years ago I heered a nigger from down in Collinsville say he worked at a service station since he got old enough but now he's well-to-do and owns a nice house. After he kind of retired the went into business on his own and now he's a plumber and has a back-hoe and a dump-truck.

I've heered him say several times there wadn't no need of a nigger bein' pore. He said if he'd try, if he'd get out there and work and be worth a dog-gone when he got a job, people would keep him at work. He said when a man hired him he would get out there and work. He says that's the trouble with most of these niggers now, they won't work. If you don't pay him good wages he just won't work, and if you pay him good wages, he'll drag around and half do what you want done.

I worked around Cobb Brothers Construction Co. down there and they worked mostly niggers, tho' I don't see how they put up with 'em. I wouldn't have. I told the foreman I'd run those son-of-a-guns off ever day, I'd look at new faces ever mornin'. Said you don't put up with whites a-doin' that.

You've seen niggers like that, just standin' there with their arms up on their shovel handle. Wasn't worth nuthin' a-tall. Sich as that's the reason they're pore. You have some white people the same way. They ain't gonna work and that's the ones what's on welfare right today...

Ah, you take the old people back before I was born and after I was born an I grown on up. I've heered 'em talk about, you know, they treated the niggers good and ever'thang. They just stayed in their place and the whites stayed in theirs. My daddy thought that. He didn't believe in 'em gettin' out and doing just like niggers'll do. You know how niggers'll do, just a bunch of ol' sorry ones, just lay around and drink and won't work and sich as that. That's the kind of folks that needs straightenin' out. It's not only niggers, it's whites. It's like that over here around Rock Creek, what oughtta been done, they a little bit kinfolks to me that I'm talkin' to you about, that is just about eat up with cancer. What oughtta been done to him and her too, oughtta been took out and put across a log. That's what the Klan'd do fer you if you was just that sorry, a way back before the FBI got in.

Back when my daddy was comin' up, when you wouldn't get and provide for your family and try to work an' do somethin' , they'd put you across a log and they'd tear your hip pockets up.

The community would hep you if you was tryin' to hep yourself. We had "workins" back then I was growing' up. That was the way the community done. If some feller in the community got sick or something happened he had bad luck or somethin' 'nother, well, the whole community, maybe 40 or 50 people would get out there and work his crops worked out just like they kept their own crops worked out. They kept him going just like he was there able to work. When he got able to work, then he takened his crop and went on with it. Then when somebody else got sick and he was well, he went right in and helped him. We done that. We had "workin's". It'd be maybe 40 or 50 horses to hit a man's place where it needed plowin' and they'd be some feller, an older man, you know, to get out there and see what needed doin' and he'd put 4 or 5 runnin' around corn, or some them hoein, cotton, or whatever needed to be done on that farm. Shoot, we'd work his crop out in a day and a half . We'd keep going back 'til he got over his sick spell.

We didn't have money to give, maybe 50 cents or a dollar. That's go a long way back in those days. I made a crop when Eloise and I first got married. We borrowed \$65 in money to

make a crop, buy fertiliz' and everthang, and to live on for the summer. Sixty-five dollars. How far would \$65 go today? It would just buy a few groceries for one week.

We raised a lot of stuff to eat and canned a lot of stuff . Didn't have no freezer, no electricity, nothin' like that, no phones. (Well, we did have a phone, the old crank kind. You might notta ever seen them, I guess. People would put up a wire through the woods and an ol' crank phone on the wall, you know. You'd run a little ol' crank on it and ring a number and talk to one another. You didn't have no phone bill.)

Naw, people won't help you do nothin' now-a-days. You can't even hire them to help you now. If a feller has a job he ain't got time to help, and these shiftless people that ain't got no job, they ain't gonna help you do nuthin'. They wouldn't hit a lick at a snake. They on welfare and they wantta stay on that.

The KKK will never be strong again. All they'll ever do is march cause the federal government's agin 'em. They'll be a Klan as long as the world stands, I figger, but it'll be small groups that's scared to do anything. . .

[Note: This interview contained the views of a portion of the population. The tendency now (1998) is to ignore these views as "racist", which they were, and as something to be pushed aside and forgotten -- which would be a re-writing of history, a la Orwell's " 1984 " . We therefore publish this interview. Some of its repetitions have been excised as it rambles on in the same vein for several more pages.- M.E.W., Editor]

ANOTHER VIEW OF "MISSISSIPPI BURNING"



Courthouse in Philadelphia, Mississippi

Taped Interview: January 21, 1989

Interviewer: Kenneth McWilliams, Subject's grandson.

Interviewee: Mrs. Dessie Lee Davis McWilliams

Location: Route 2, Box 18

Philadelphia, Mississippi.

D.O.B.: October 3, 1925

I was born in Neshoba County, Mississippi on the third day of the ninth month in 1925. I've lived in Neshoba all my life, sixty-four years. It really has changed since I was a girl. I used to say I could close my eyes and go all over, but I can't any more, it has grown so.

I would say it's changed for the better. 'Cause I can remember when I was young, we'd have a little old place where you had to go eat, you'd go kind-of in the side, you didn't go in the front to get anything, an' now you can we can go anywhere and sit down and eat. You know, if you got the money to pay for it.

I was about sixteen years old when I got married the first time. That was in 1942. I was still on the farm but my husband public worked about a year, and then sharecropped a year. He made one sharecrop and then he quit.

There's a lots of things that's different now than when I was a child. Because my mother and my father taught me that I had to respect anybody if they was 21, if they were married or if they weren't. I had to say "Yes, Sir" and "No, Ma'am". I didn't know nothin' about this "yeah" and "naw" like they do today.

I went to school in a little country school. And like I told my kids, when the superintendent and them didn't get enough wood, we'd have to go pick up little wood and stuff to make fire in our heater to keep warm until they could get some. We'd have one teacher trying to teach all grades and she would teach through the eight grade. In that building, we had so much air comin' through, you'd feel like you was on the outside. [ooooOH!]

We always went to school where it was black teachers. And black students. We had to walk to get there. I don't know how far it was, but it was 'fur', a long way. I know lots of kids had to walk two and three miles everyday to school and from school. Because we didn't have a way for black people to get to school but walk. I didn't feel hard toward white people cause they had a better school, maybe, or better education. That the way life was. You know, some people may complain, but I didn't think anything about it. They'd go to their schools and we'd go to our schools, and really, that's the way I liked it. We just accepted it and went on, 'til the court decided to mix schools. All my children had done got up a good size, even my baby, [when schools were segregated]. When she was coming on up going to school, and a couple more of my kids, it was rough when they had to give up they school and go to another one. The name of the school was Carver, into Neshoba Central. But they didn't take long, they adjusted to it. Except it was harder for us because were used to, you know, everything, you just being to yourself, the colored peoples, because I have heard white preacher come here and be talking to me about going to they church, you know. I know they don't care if you go to they church, but I'd rather stay at mine and that's a fact.

I never had no trouble with prejudice 'cause I avoided most of it. I always looked at it this a-away, they may be prejudice, or I could have been prejudice, I just think if you tend to your business, they didn't bother you. I lived here all my life and nobody bothered me. You know, we ladies have the rights, a lots of them got now, but it's just what you get used to and you live with youself, that's the way you do. And I know that's a lots to ask of you young people now.

I didn't have much association with white peoples when I was growing' up. We worked for 'em, you know. We didn't go to school with 'em, we didn't go to church with 'em. We just got

used to it that way. If you was working on their place, like if you was makin' a crop, you knowed what you was going to do. You'd get up and get through with you housework and go in the field and work, you know, if you ain't lazy. Be lazy, you may goof off and then they had to talk to you. I just never did have no problem, not that way.

I didn't see that movie *Mississippi Burning* so I don't know if it prejudice is any worse today than it was when I was growing up. I didn't see all that much then, and that's the reason I couldn't tell you now. 'Cause I didn't see it. I reckon I was kind of looking through rose colored glasses that I seen kind of what I wanted to see. That was, they treat you right if you did right. But they didn't just go out of they way to mistreat nobody, that I saw. You see, when I come along, lots of things was changing f rom where it had been. From when I heard my father and them talk about and what I saw. Everybody, you know, was working and living close to each other, because he was our Boss. We called him our Boss and we didn't stay that far from him. And that's the way it was.

There's a lots of things my father and my mother said happened when they was a kid. When they come up, it was a little rougher. I'd rather not get into it 'cause I'm just saying what I saw. You see, seem to me, like you working for white peoples or black peoples or whatever, you learn and they learn a lot as the years kept going by. At the first it was a lot different, but they learned that everything couldn't be the same way. I ain't trying to polish it over, but you know, just saying what I saw, 'Cause I don't believe in talking about things I don't know nothing about.

I don't know what sparked the incident here in Philadelphia. We lived out in the country and didn't know anything about a lot of things happening in town. If you had a TV or something, with you mostly working, well, couldn't set and watch it all times, so you didn't know what was going on. It may be something happened here, or it may have been something Martin Luther King said, I don't know. I always felt like -- now this is my opinion, I felt like so many [blacks] was following Martin Luther King until they [the whites] just felt like if he could come through, talking and going on like he was, that was going to make the black peoples here change. Now that's the way I looked at it, but now I don't know if that was the reason, they was going to show 'em they wadn't gonna change it. I don't know.

I remembers when your Pawpaw went to one of the little old church down here when it was on fire. He never breathed nothing much about it. Well, that was something you knowed to keep secret if he'd a-knowed something, 'cause there wasn't no other way to it. But I don't really think he knew anything. He was home in the bed when they called him to go with them to see about the fire. And he went and he said the church was already falling down, so he just turned around and come on back. He mentioned something about a truck and some peoples with a gun, but he never, you know, said nothing about who they was or who he thought they was. I don't know a thing about 'em, 'cause I was at home.

The FBI men started coming around, lots of times. They talked to him [Pawpaw] when he was picking cotton. Then they'd get him and put him in the car with 'em and go and ride and talk. All they'd be wanting was what he'd be telling them, an' we felt like he had to be telling them somethin' for them to be riding him, but I can't say about that, because I know they wadn't saying nothing around us. I don't know.

I think Boss was scarer than Pawpaw because he didn't want to get mixed up in it. That's what I could see, but now, they were always saying Boss was a nice person. I don't know if that movie harmed or helped. I'm saying you got a long way to go for lots of peoples. Not only white, but black, too. A lots of whites, you meet 'em in the streets or at they home, in the store, they speak to you and treat you nice, and lots of them don't, so you know that's the way I see it.

Now somebody else may say it's a lots different. But I been around here a long time and they treat you, I think most of them, treat you pretty nice.

I really couldn't say if it brought peoples closer together, or if it changed the way they felt about each other. ' Because, like I said, all my life, nearly, I ain't had that much to do, not social, with the whites. I don't know they attitude on things, but I have went to some black churches, and some white ones just like we were. Really, all my life there have been whites come to our church and they were always treated, you know, nice, because, to us we were just always proud that they would come to our church. So, I don't know if the movie brought them closer or further, of if it have anything to do with anything or not.

My opinion, I don't see where seeing the movie was any different than when they found the bodies [of the Civil Right workers]. 'Cause all that went on and we knowed it. If you don't say nothing, if you don't tell a living soul, you still knew it went on because they found the bodies. They found them in a burnt car, or van, or whatever they was in. I've never been no "news" person, so I can't tell you they names or dates. My husband used to come home and ask me about what happened on the news an' what the weather says. I could never tell him, because I never did listen to the news that much. But I don't see anything that movie woulda hurt.

But I do know things are changed 'cause I remember the old days when we used to ride on the bus, riding to Rankin County. I know we would have to sit behind a little... they would have a little thing sort of like a little curtain where you had just a couple of seats in back for the blacks and the rest of it for the whites. I can remember all that, but really, I just never did think too much about it, you know, just so I was going where I was going. If they wanted to ride up there, it was all right for me to ride back there. But everybody, you know, wadn't like that.

We always could sit around [with white people] and social with each other, just laugh and talk and speak or something that way, you could do that. Always have. But it stopped there. If you cross the line to get closer they'd push you back. It's that way.

When you go to stores in Philadelphia to do shopping, they lean over backwards to be nice. They tryin' to put aside things that happened because they want everybody's business, 'cause one money spend like the other, the way I see it.

When I was young we always go to town in the fall of the year, or else in the late summer, and they would buy you new clothes to wear. I generally went to town about twice a year. I use to tell my kids I had two school dress. I remember good when I would wear a dress one day and wash it the next, and the next day I wore what I had on the day before. We had a couple made we'd wear on Sunday for our Sunday clothes, but I'm talking about school. One dress was pleated down the waist and the other would have a tuck kindly over the shoulder. If you wore the pleated one, you'd wear the straight one the next day, and then you'd be wearing the pleated on Wednesday, and that's the way you made the week. On Friday, you maybe wear one of your Sunday dresses on Friday.

You had to make-do. I was a grown woman when I got a coat. You know, most kids now has got coats before they is two years old. The most I got was a thin sweater.

We never got fair pay for our work. I've many a half-day or sometime whole days, working the white peoples' homes till 3:00 in the afternoon for \$5, and plenty times I worked half-days and wouldn't get but \$2. can't tell you hardly was this caused from being in the South in general, or by the Depression, or War. All I know is what most of them was going, and it was the war, most of it. It just the way they be.

Being a sharecropper, we raised cotton, corn, peanuts, peas, potatoes, tomatoes, just all kinds of vegetables. We could sell what we didn't need, if we wanted. Lots of times the way we did, was give others what we didn't need, the way most farmers did. They take their vegetables and stuff and can them and still had more than they needed so they'd give the neighbors some.

Like today, if I got somethin' in my garden and somebody come along and want it, I'd tell them to get 'em a mess of it. I always said that was more my nature, but lots of people sell if they had more than what they wanted. Nothing was ever wasted.

I remember when the war came along about 1945, but it didn't affect us too much. Daddy, he didn't have to go to service so how could it affect us? Things got a little hard. They rationed your shoes and stuff like that. You had to have ration stamps to get you a pair. Just little things like that was different. I know those in the service thought it wadn't that easy, but I didn't know nothing about that.

Our folks, my daddy an' his daddy, me and my children, have always been sharecroppers. They would have learned more and done more better in life if they had gone to school more. About all they knowed was to work in the crops and, like I said, in a way, they felt like they had to have a family to help because the man and his wife couldn't work it all by themselves. That was a way of living, to get your bills paid. So they would keep the kids to help them, 'cause I know we did. But you can't just go through life... A lots of people think, they blame the white folks for everything, but it was our fault. And I have to tell the truth about it.

We always had three meals a day. My daddy believed in that, but he didn't think much about education. See, when I was going to school I couldn't go till after we was through with our crops and all. That's when most kids missed going. In the fall when you get through bringin' in your crop, sometimes in November, or the last of October, you'd get to go to school then. In the spring when you planted corn and stuff, you had to get out and help plant. Even my kids had to work like that until they changed the school over, until Neshoba Central where I went to a meeting. See, it wadn't all the white peoples' fault, we caint' put it all on them. My husband was the one doing the crop and was just one of those things until I went to a meeting where Mr. Clarence Copeland, the school superintendent, was telling about how he used to work. He would go to work and come back home. He would go to school half a day and then come back home and work half a day. I listened to him and I got to thinking, and I come back home and my kids went to going to school that way. They'd go to school in the morning and come back and help us hoe the cotton in the afternoon. You see, lots of it was us, it wadn't the white people caused that. You know it's hard to say, but if you tell the truth, that's the way it was.

If you let your kids work all day and didn't go to school a week at a time, they didn't tell you, you should let 'em go to school, that was it! They didn't let you keep them at home! Going to school more helped a lot.

There was lots of things went on that kids didn't know nothing about. I heard my Papa say he made some whiskey, but I never saw him. When I was young, the main form of going anywhere was in the wagon. As far back as I can remember, the roads inside Philadelphia was paved -- in town they were. Lots of roads out in the country that I can remember, weren't, but I can't remember the dates -- in about '40, '41, or '43, there wadn't no paved roads going out of town. Lots of little roads here that wadn't paved. I know [Hwy.] 21 wadn't, because that's the road we lived on, out on 21 goin' up towards Kemper County. Wadn't paved roads anywhere. [name inaudible] used to carry the mail and he'd get bogged down because it got so bad one time you couldn't hardly go through it.

I'd see some cars when I was a girl, but I didn't know nothing, no car models or nothing that way. To tell the truth, I don't know too much about them today, but I used to hear 'em talk about these cars and all I describe, the best I can describe 'em, was they was kind of high and they could go where a wagon never could go. Anyway, I had peoples that had cars, 'cause my uncle used to come from the Delta and we just thought that was the thing! But you know, other peoples used cars.

I saw a lot of Choctaw Indians around Philadelphia when I was a child. I saw 'em, but I never did associate that much with them until I was grown and, you know, lived on the same place with some. When you come to know them, they just as nice as anybody else. You treat them nice, they treat you nice. It wadn't much different the way whites treated the Indians and the way they treated blacks. About the same, as I could see. Some say they was treated badder 'cause they were Indians. It may have been worse, but I don't know. I just seen them treated about like the same as we were.

We didn't never have to go to church if we didn't wanna go. But my family, my mother especially, when she was able, wanted us to go and she raised us up to go. That come up just kind of a part of your life, like when you get hongry you go to the kitchen and eat. We just always believed in the church and always said if it was Baptists, Methodists, Sanctified, whichever one it was, and you was close to it, you would join and go. We used to go to church more than they do now. And now, you take most families got a couple of cars in they yard, but they don't go to church. We walked to church, or got on a wagon. I can remember a time when we used to walk from old Greenville to Macedonia and believe you me, that's about three or four miles. We would walk there and back. Heered a sermon preached and then come back home. You wanted to go, you walked. It wadn't too fer to get out and walk to church. Church was one thing you could count on. We went to that and visited and see other young peoples, and stuff like that. That's where you'd meet at.

When I was coming up they didn't have nowhere else you could go. Like now, you know, young peoples don't have no place else to go. If you had a little boyfriend, and you liked each other, he could carry your home, just like the kids today. Just one thing, people was stricter than they was today. Boy didn't pick up no girl and carry her riding or carry her off like they do now. So maybe they come to the house on Sunday, or be on the porch with your parents be there. It may should have been better, but young people then done things they shouldn't have, they doing the same things today. Ain't but one thing made 'em different today, is they got more money and different ways of traveling to get to where they want to go. And they got more places they can go get together and that's what makes them different from what they used to be, to me. But somebody else may see it a whole lot different.

Used to be if you was working out by the day, you worked steady from sunup till sundown, but if you was just out there with your parents you worked, but were allowed to stop and rest, or play, or whatever you wanted to do. You see, most times the family was off in the field to itself, wadn't no way for you to be courting in the fields. If you wanted to talk to somebody you had to do it when you was in school, or in Sunday School or church, you know, places like that. We didn't talk to each other every day. We didn't know what a phone was when we were growing' up. See, I was done married and had a couple kids when I got a radio in my house. That's different today; when most people get married now, they wants everything all at once.

I don't rightly know if courting longer and just at church on week-ends made marriages any stronger than they is now. I think most peoples took marriage seriouser than what they do today. If they got married, most of them stayed together. It wouldn't be easy and it ain't easy today. Today they get out of marriage easy and go on and do what they wanted to do. Back then, you didn't do that.

Most folks didn't divorce back then. Oh, now and then you heered tell of one, but most of the time we heard stuff like that it had happened in another town, it don't happen here. But now, you go anywhere, you hear peoples say it used to be we heard stuff happened in Alabama or Texas or somewhere, but now it's here at home. It was goin' on then, but we couldn't hear about it. We didn't have nothing to hear about it on.

By the time you hear something back then, it had done got old. Something happen here tonight, everybody you meet knowed it, 'cause they done heard it, most of the time. These people may think it's better for people not to know they business, but you can't hide anything any more. You may hide it for a while, but it's gonna come to light. When you was keeping it kinda under cover, you just got by for a while.

That's why we got problems with politics and religion here today; it was under cover for a while, but it was brought to light. They havin' all these scandals now because, like cream, it always rises to the top.

I just always tried to live the best I could and, you know, try to tend to my business and leave the other person alone. That helped me a long way. I ain't gonna say life couldn't a-been better f or me, but it wadn't all bad. And living, when you come through and look back and see that you have lived this long and see your childrens all grown, you ain't been arrested, you ain't been in jail, nothing like that, you can still say, Thank God for life as it is!

A lot of kids, when they are young, they have people ask them what they goin' to do in the future, what they plan on doin'. If these people were to hear me say it, they would think I was just settin' down tellin' you something wrong, but I ain't never had no goals that I wanted to get done or to run over to Chicago for, or somewhere, 'cause I've had opportunity to go. To me, wadn't nowhere no better than right here where I'm at, and that's at home, here in Neshoba County. I was born and raised here and if I don't be visiting or something, I'll die here. But you know, I just ain't never been away and stayed. Course, I stayed in Sunflower a couple years and stayed in Rankin County, but I always end up back here. I just ain't really had no desire to go.

[In this interview Kenneth McWilliams, in asking his grandmother questions about how blacks were treated when she was a girl, kept trying to get her to say how mistreated the black race was. His grandmother kept repeating that they were not treated as badly by the general white population as the present generation has been led to believe. She admitted that were some ignorant red-necked stinkers to 'watch out for and to stay out of their way'. Mostly it seemed to be a "live and let live" relationship between the races. The plight of the black sharecropper does not appear much worse than that of white sharecroppers during the 1930's Depression in rural Mississippi.

Mr. McWilliams, commenting upon what he learned from this interview, states, "I learned that much of my beliefs of how life was during this period were ill conceived and wrong. I learned (1) that no matter what the conditions are surrounding a society, there will still be some prejudice, but that one event does not a story make. (2) Education was not a burden, like today, but a welcome break from the fields given only as a last resort., and (3) dating was not possible to the extent that we find today because of transportation, but when you found a marriage partner, it was to the death!" M.E.W., Editor]

CIVIL RIGHTS: THEN AND NOW



Taped interview: February 28, 1989.

Interviewer: Tim Scruggs

Interviewee: Mr. D. Glenn Myers

Location: 315 Northwood Drive,
Philadelphia, Mississippi.

D.O.B.: June 3, 1937

When we first moved to the south in the early 1960's, there was much racial tension in Philadelphia. It was a bad time for us Northerners to move to Mississippi. We felt a bit like people eyed us with a certain amount of suspicion. I think people felt like we had ulterior motives. Some thought we were Communist, some thought we came just to stir up civil rights ideas, that we were agitators from the North 'cause at the time there were other civil rights people coming down here.

Our fear was real, and I remember feeling like -- well, always being a little afraid. Partly just knowing that there was a separate place in theaters for the blacks to sit, or when you'd go to a certain fountain -- a water fountain -- there'd be a fountain for whites and a fountain for blacks. That sort of thing made us uneasy.

It became evident to me that the prejudice went both ways. The blacks didn't trust the whites and the whites didn't trust the blacks. Also, prejudice was not limited to action against black people. A Choctaw [Indian] Church with a white pastor was bombed three times between 1964 and 1965. Perhaps prejudice was directed at anyone who did not fit the standard southern-white mold.

We soon found, however, that every Southerner was not violently prejudiced. But the ones who were vocal and violent were feared by those who may have sympathized with the persons being terrorized. People were afraid to speak out against acts of prejudice for fear of violence that may have been turned against them.

Our hope for the future as an integrated and peaceful society lies in our children. They relate together without memories of past personal experiences of pain, anger and violence due to skin color. They get along because they have not been conditioned to hate by a segregated society.

Only by understanding what we have been through can we accurately understand where we are now and how much we have changed. The blacks' civil rights in the state of Mississippi have changed drastically over the past 20 to 25 years. There is much left to accomplish, but at least a good direction has been set. We'll get there.

THE VIETNAM WAR



Taped Interview: March 9, 1989.

Interviewer: Maurice L. Evins

Interviewee: Ogie Lee Clayton, Jr.
1527 17th Avenue
Meridian, Mississippi.

Location: Pentecostal Church of God, Meridian, Ms

D.O.B.: December 31, 1949

What was the Vietnam War fought for? It's kind of hard to say. Actually, our involvement started when President Kennedy sent a 500 Special Forces Unit to Vietnam to reconnoissance the area to see why the conflict between- the Vietnamese government and the Communist-led National Liberation Front guerrillas continued, to survey the area out, to scope it out, to see what was there, and to report back. The problem was that when our U. S. Special Forces landed, they met with resistance. They met "Charlie", the Vietcong.

Robert McNarara [Secretary of Defense] told the President that the United States should pull out, but Kennedy said if we pulled the Unit out it would make him look bad, make his election look bad, and he sent additional manpower over, I think it was an additional 2,000 men over, to bring them out. When the new troops got there, they also met with resistance. That was when the war started.

When the war escalated in the 60's, I think in was in 1961 or 1962, I was in school, the University of Southern Mississippi, in Hattiesburg. At that time, college students were given a draft deferment. The Selective Service had set up a lottery system where every young man was given a number. If your number came up you were considered for the draft. A lot of times the school would stand up for you if you were a student with a college deferment. My draft number came up February 14 but I appealed it before the local Draft Board here in Meridian. It came up again on March 22, 1971, and I again appealed it before the Board.

One particular person on the Draft Board told me he was determined to get me. I'll never forget it. Around that time we had lost six guys from my neighborhood in the fighting. They didn't last longer than a week, or two weeks, over there before they'd get killed. I felt like this person knew the number of local black guys from my neighborhood who had been bumped off , and that he was trying to get me bumped off , too. It sounded like he was from the Klan, that's the way I felt. The way things were going, mostly black guys were being drafted and there was a lot of black regiments they put up on the front lines. That's why a lot of us kind of resented the war because there was an idea. we thought, to try to wipe out the black race. There were a lot of black soldiers on the front lines that hasn't been publicized to even this day.

At the time I felt like there was some kind of racial discrimination and they were out to get all the blacks out of our neighborhood. Especially after this fellow told me he was determined to get me. I didn't like It. Today I still don't like him.

In school I was the security officer in our dormitory. When school closed on June 4, my job was to secure everything on the campus in my area, and to check in all the keys and clothes and everything, and turn my report in to the Administration Office when I left. When I got home on Saturday, June 5, I found another draft notice waiting. It said for me to be at my Station on Monday morning at 6:30 A.M. I tried to get in contact with G. V. Sonny Montgomery, my Congressman, but when I talked to his secretary, she said he didn't deal with things like that. I didn't have time to appeal again.

It wasn't my war and I felt I shouldn't have to go. It wasn't my responsibility, but something our politicians had got us into that we didn't need to be in. Nevertheless, on June 7th I

reported to my local Selective Service Station and from there I was sent to Jackson. That's how I got into the war. I was drafted.

If I hadn't reported I would have been classified as A.W.O.L. When classified A.W.O.L. the AC Station notifies Washington, D.C., who sends Military Police out to look for you. When they find you, you are automatically put away three years for punishment. I reported for duty on schedule.

Basic training had been set up for ten weeks but when the war got heavier they broke it down to eight weeks. Then they became even stricter and broke it down to six weeks. My basic training was for six weeks at Ft. Polk, Louisiana. It was a rushed through deal to try to train young men for combat. Most guys, which we called "Eleven Bravo", or "Eleven Bang Bang", were sent right on out to the war with only six weeks training.

They held back recruits with special skills to send to special schools. Since I had so much schooling and my IQ tested at 148, they wanted me to continue at a special school. They sent me to Med School at Ft. Sam. [Ft. Samuel Houston in San Antonio. Med School lasted ten weeks after which I graduated third in my class.

Originally I was set to go to Ft. Jackson, but my orders were changed and I was reordered to report to the Philippines on the 17th, and then on to Saigon. When I got there I found a confused situation. They would send us where we were supposed to go with a lot of information, but until we got there to the particular spot we couldn't talk no more about where we were going. When we got to our location, we didn't know what would happen. We never knew who was firing at us, sometimes we couldn't see. I didn't like it because a lot of times we fought and then we were pulled back and Charlie retook the same hill that we took. We'd be pulled back and Charlie would move right back onto the same hill. Well, what did we gain from it? We didn't gain nothing. A war without a cause. The only thing we did was to lose a lot of young lives.

A lot of men didn't come back. A war, when you fight a war, you're supposed to go fight to win, but really, we lost. Look at the lives we lost! Where did it get us? Nowhere. Every war that the U. S. has fought, when they won a battle, they accomplished something, but in this war, we lost respect. We ain't gained nothing!

I went in with the 82nd Airborne Unit. We were told that we were going in and hold the area and protect it, to keep the Gooks from overpowering. That never did happen. We kept going around in circles. We'd go in the thick part of the jungle to hold a particular spot and when we moved to another spot, Charlie would get back the first spot. We'd take that place, we'd take that hill, and then we'd go take another hill, and Charlie would be back on the first hill. It was a back and forth war, back and forth. I never understood why. A war, when you go there to fight, you go there to win. We could have won that war, that war would have been ended in 14 days, but because of the higher-ups and because of the Geneva Convention, and because they said the U.S. had to abide by this rule and that rule. But Charlie didn't abide by rules.

Vietnam is a small place, most of it a thick jungle-like area. We were trained for open warfare where one could hide behind buildings. Jungle warfare is different. The only way they knew how to train us was by using experienced men that had been through it Jungle warfare, it ain't like people think it is. They watch movies and fantasize, but you have to be there to know what it's like. In the jungle you not only have to fight Charlie, but you got to fight the heat, you got to fight tropical diseases. You got to live in that condition. The VC were raised up in the jungle and their bodies became immune to it. We weren't. We were raised on peas, cornbread, and nice weather, you know, where you could go in and sit down and cool off. There it is hot continuously and we weren't used to it. Heat was the thing that hurt a lot of us. Heat and tropical diseases. Heat was the main thing.

Jungle warfare is a totally different kind of war. It wasn't the kind you where you could drive your jeep or tank or stuff like that and sit back and take it easy and fire when you got ready. This war you did a lot of foot soldiering. You had to carry a lot of ammo and other heavy equipment, you needed your back. The only help you got was through choppers or through the Air Force. Most of the times guys were on hills you couldn't drive your jeep through. A lot of places you couldn't even drive tanks. You just had to walk. Walk. That's what made this war so different. You had to walk. You had to climb. You had to cut through thickets in places a jeep couldn't go. It was good to see a chopper every once in a while, but it was so thick they couldn't see down, but the ones on the ground could see up.

You just had to find a grid or the location on your map where Charlie was supposed to be and that was it. And Charlie was skillful. He was skilled on the land and he knew how to survive off of rice. He knew how to get food out of the swamp. It was no problem to him. They had underground cities, little small communities they built. They had ammo. in the hills, inside the hills, where you could be walking on the ground and you'd be walking on top of Charlie without knowing it. They had caves sometimes two or three miles long. You'd be surprised at what they had done. If we bombed two or three days in a row they'd holler truce. We destroyed a lot of undergrounds with a blow torch [a flame thrower?]. Sometimes in places we found we set [inaudible] mines to blow them up. A lot of caves we went in and a lot of caves we came out of. A lot of times we just wiped out the whole area. We did a lot of things that we don't let ourselves think about. Using bombs we could have won that war in 14 days, a month, and got out of there and forgot all about it. But we went ahead on foot and fifty-thousand of our guys got killed.

Saigon was just a small city. Saigon and Hanoi, and on over to Da Nang, these places were villages, mostly, connected by narrow jungle trails. Whole families actually fought in the war. Sometimes we hear, well, why did you shoot kids, why were kids destroyed, why were families destroyed? Americans got a bad name for that, but if they'd knew what Charlie had done, they'd know that Charlie set booby traps. They'd know that Charlie set kids up as booby traps, set bombs on them sometimes. Old men would be set up. Sometimes old women would be set up. Young kids would be set up with a detonator and were sent running toward G.I.'s. They would blow away 6 or 7 guys at one time. You didn't know what to do; it was either you or them. Either you let them come to you and wipe you out or you shot and killed them.

What's wrong with American people is that they don't understand what went on over there. They think we just went over there and fired a shot here and fired a shot there. They just don't understand. Even though we went there and fought, they still don't understand about fighting in Vietnam. They criticize guys who came back, saying they are crazy. They criticize the veterans and say they have no sense. Well, we got mistreated. We had a dirty name when we came back. We killed children, we did this, we did that. Yet in the beginning they said, Uncle Sam wants you to go over there and fight, and if you don't, we'll spit on you and make you ashamed. After going over there and doing all that we did, when we came back, we still had no respect.

Yes, it was a war that shouldn't have ever been fought on land. All we would have had to do was use the Air Force and bombed it for 14 days. There's a lot of things I could say now that would blow a lot of things up, but under security clearance, I'm not permitted to say, even though I've been out of the service a lot of years. There's a lot of things that's happened in America in so many ways that you'd be surprised. It's surprisingly dirty. Sometimes things are instigated. There's a lot in the VC wars that won't ever be brought out. Just like what's going on now with Colonel North. He's taking the blame for everything, but you'll never know the truth. Yet, still, somebody had to give him orders. There's the CIA and the SIA, and there's a lot of things that go on behind doors that we'll never know the truth about.

In the Vietnam War, Lt. Kelly took the rap because he was told to go into a village and burn it down because Charlie was there, that's where Charlie was set up. Sometimes Charlie killed between 50 and 60 guys every day, and when the word got back, Lt. Kelly was told to go in there to search and destroy. That was his order. A soldier must obey and order. If you don't, then you break all the rules. That's what most Americans can't see; they look on the outside of these things but they need to read the military law, the military command, to see what the rules and regulations are for an officer, for a captain, general, or sergeant, or private, and what their orders are. They are strictly enforced. If you do not obey your superior officer, then you are considered to be a traitor, or if you don't obey, by military law you're sent to the prison stockade.

I was in the 82nd Airborne Unit, which is, more or less, a higher branch of armed forces, a special unit that's trained a little bit more sophisticated than the regular army. They are trained to handle any kind of situation. We would generally parachute from a plane to land right in the heart of an area, each man qualified to take out or do whatever he had to do. We were trained to do things the regular Army was not trained to do. The Army fights as a unit, but in the Airborne, though they fight together, each man is a one-man army. According to the tests and main occupation services, duty, how sharp you are, how alert you are, and how responsible you are, rank in the Airborne is advanced pretty fast. I made sergeant pretty fast, fourteen months.

Fighting in Vietnam taught me something. It taught me how to respect myself. It taught me how to trust in myself. It taught me to survive. I was injured. I was sprayed with Agent Orange. My hip was knocked out of place, and I still have bone fragments where my ankle was broken. That took away part of my life, you know, like playing football; in school I had an opportunity to go pro, and it hurt when I had to leave.

However, I feel I came out better than many. Some have bad psychological problems. When you see your buddies go down in war, falling like fleas, you see guys, young people, young fellows who could have contributed a lot to society, that lost their lives for no reason, it's hard to return to normal. A lot of guys who came back had to learn how to re-live or re-learn how to face reality.

Congress just recently began helping the guys who fought in the Vietnam War. They are giving them priority to get jobs. But when they first came back, unh-uh. Nobody wanted to hire them. Nobody wanted to work with them because they were killers. We didn't ask to go over there and do that. We didn't beg them to send us overseas, we were told to go. We didn't want to go shoot and kill, we were made to do it. This is supposed to be a country of dignity and high honor, we are supposed to show all kinds of moral respect to people and help them. The United is supposed to show love. The United States is supposed to show kindness.. The United States of America is supposed to be so outstanding, yet the United States showed no concern about us, the ones that needed their help. We had to beg for help. We had to go march to overcome it, we had to march at the White House and had to demonstrate so guys that fought in the war could get something before Congress would do anything. They sat up in their office, lounge around, while guys were getting killed. What was another man to them?

The only reason I agreed to do this interview is because you are a member of my church. It is not just something you talk about every day. It's something that you just don't really care to get into. You'd rather say nothing about it.

War always brings about changes. If it had not been for war, we wouldn't have changes. You got to have war, and I guess the reason I say that if you don't kill of some of the people, the world would be overpopulated. I feel like that's the way God wanted it to be, to have wars. Always have to have a fight.

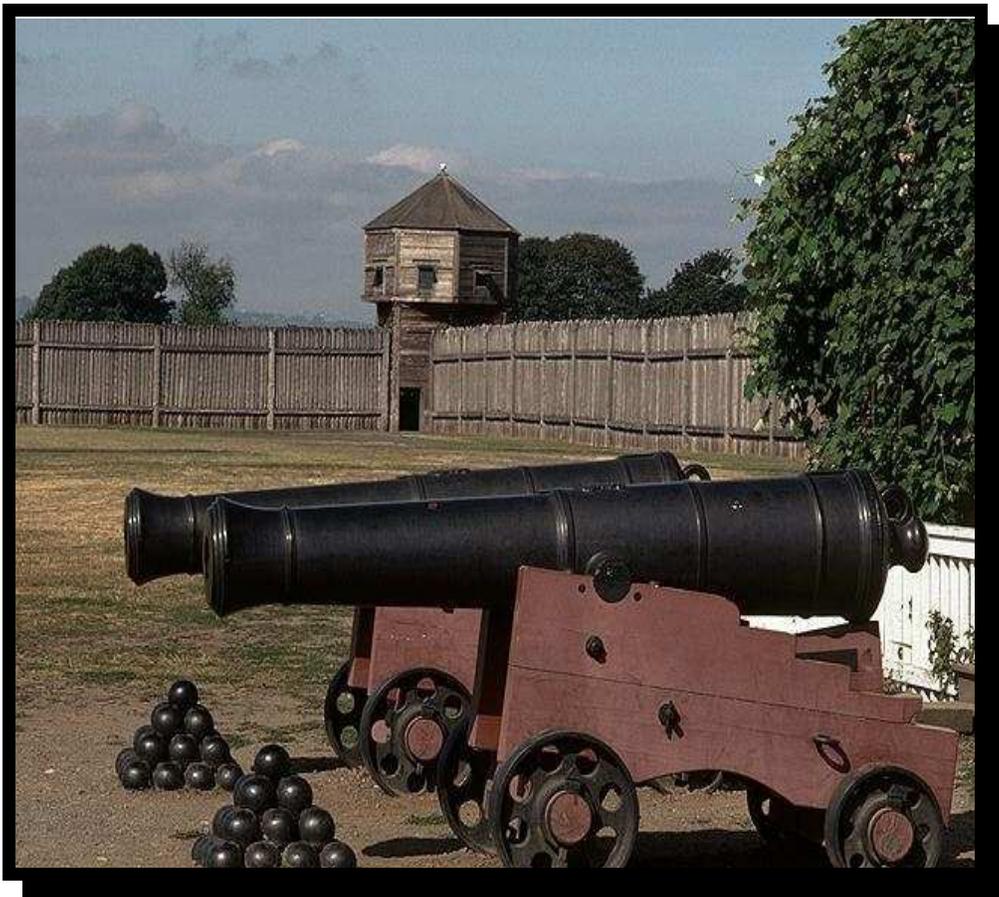
The U.S. has been fighting wars on other grounds. It fights wars in foreign countries; there hasn't been a war here since the Civil War, the last big war they had here. Today's Americans

haven't seen people running and hiding and dodging. They don't see people separated from their families. They don't see husbands and wives separated. They don't see villages falling down and smoke going up. They don't see planes and jets flying over dropping bombs. It's easy to sit in your house and see that going on and smile and grin, and say "Well, ain't that a shame!" Well, one day that will happen here. One day. And when that does, it's going to be a terrible war. It's different when you are fighting in somebody *else's* country, but when it comes to your door, then we can say that's another type war. How will we fight that war? It'll be a different type warfare.

VII. FAMILY HISTORY & MISCELLANEOUS



TRACING FAMILY HISTORY: THE JONES, HENRY, AND PURVIS FAMILIES



Taped interview: February 16, 1987.
Interviewer: Frances Bohl
Interviewee: Mrs. Betty Henry Tiner
Location: Route 1, Box 286
Waynesboro, Mississippi 39367
D.O.B.: December 18, 1933

When I was young my grandparents, my paternal grandparents, lived in the house with us. They would tell us family stories and my sister and I would listen. As we grew older, we realized we should have written down a lot of this stuff, but we didn't. They both died when we were just children. We began to ask our parents about these things and we learned, at an early age, who our great-grandparents were on my father's side, but he didn't know any further back than that so he couldn't help us a lot. He knew a lot of family legends and that helped, but as far as showing proof, we couldn't. We found we had a lot of loopholes to close. There was a lot of area to cover, and we began to take notes.

We began with census records and on my father's side, we traced the Jones family back to John Jones of Spartanburg, South Carolina, who had died there in 1818. John Jones left a will naming his sons Samuel, Matthew, and William, plus some daughters, but no mention was made of his wife. We still don't know who she was. That's still a puzzle. Soon after John died, his son Samuel moved his family to Burnett County, Georgia, where we found a 1820 record of him. We kept searching.

They next moved to St. Clair County, Alabama, we believe, but so far we have not been able to prove it. We searched census records, but apparently it was between census times and we missed them there. We did find a legal document where they had been there in 1830, I believe it was, but not during census time, so they must have been on the move. We found they moved a lot. We found that Samuel Jones had married Bethia Nations. There had been a lot of Nations back in South Carolina, but we never could prove who her parents were.

We came on down to the next generation, which was Jeremiah Hamilton Jones, and we stayed on that for a while. If you can imagine how many people there are named Jones and Smith, you can imagine what a time I had finding Jeremiah Hamilton Jones. There were Joneses, Joneses, Joneses, every where I looked. There were plenty of Joneses, and it reminded me of the story of the ancient mariner, "there was water, water everywhere, but nary a drop to drink. if For me, it was "Joneses, Joneses everywhere, but not the one I think! "

I finally found the one I was looking for while searching through the Scott County [Mississippi] census at the State Department of Archives and History in Jackson. I had already looked through the census of Jones, Jasper and Wayne Counties. But there he was in Scott County in 1850, and living next door was his daughter, Hulda. She was my little fifteen-year-old grandmother, Hulda (Jones) Purvis, living with her husband, Alford Purvis. So that gave me that pretty straight. I think that was about the greatest excitement I had, discovering Jeremiah Jones. I had already found one Jeremiah, but it wasn't the right one and I knew it, so when I found this one I really got excited.

We drove all over Jasper, Jones, and Wayne Counties looking for his grave. Then we read an article on the history of Jasper County, and there it was! He was buried in Hickory Grove Cemetery. We went to find his grave. We made three trips before we finally located it. But we did find it, and it was well-marked, and that made us feel good.

My great-great-grandfather, Jeremiah Hamilton Jones, a son of Samuel and Bethia (Nations) Jones, was born January 29, 1802 in Spartanburg, South Carolina. He is interesting to me because, believe it or not, he had five wives and twenty-five children, from what we can

determine. Most of his children were 'probable children', but I have only one or two that there is a question about. He probably married the first time in Burnett County, Georgia because that's where his family had moved in 1818 when he was about sixteen. His wife was Floresa Pruitt, who died at the birth of their second son. He spent some time there in Burnett County but left, I guess, to make a living. He was probably teaching at that time, I really don't know. But anyway, he left his two sons with their Pruitt grandparents in Georgia and they raised them.

Jeremiah married again and moved to Mississippi. We never could find her name, although she was the wife we are most interested in, as she was our great-great-grandmother. She had died before the 1850 census so we could not get her name. His third wife was Mary, but we don't know who she was.

His fourth wife was Teresa Wilson, her name given us by her granddaughter. His fifth and last wife, I have her name but I won't give it to you because she is still a little bit of a puzzle. I still don't know what her last name was.

Jeremiah H. Jones, taught at Hickory Grove School near Laurel, Miss. He taught in a little school that was on the grounds where the cemetery is now. This was around 1860 when he taught although he was living in Jones County at that time. Jeremiah died in October of 1879 in Jones County, Miss. He had lived in Jones County in 1860 and 1870, but he was teaching in Jasper Co. when he died. I presume he had moved back to Jones but he was buried in Hickory Grove Cemetery in Jasper County.

We were not able to find marriage records on his wives. I have written everywhere I could write, but as my luck turns out, that courthouse burned in such-and-such a year, and wedding records were destroyed. I'm working on Georgia cemetery records now, trying to find records of his first and second wives. Maybe I'll get lucky some day, but it's just part of the program. It's like a jigsaw, it *all* comes together after a while. It wouldn't be a bit of fun if you could work it all out, and what do you do with it when you get it put together? You can glue it on cardboard and tack it on the wall, but you really don't want it for a decoration, do you? So family history is about like that, when you get it all put together you start on somebody else because it's so much *fun* to play with the puzzle.

Considering that I'm a great-grandmother, I have ten generations of the Joneses, including John Jones in South Carolina. This is interesting to me because it's something I can hand down to my children -- my three children and eight grandchildren and one great-granddaughter. I have to pinch myself to believe I have a great-granddaughter. She was born in November of last year.

We found that our Jeremiah H. Jones had three brothers that were preachers; Ransom Jeremy Jones, Henry Tecumseh Jones, and Lazarus Jackson Jones. Jeremiah himself was a teacher, and at one time he was the Tax Assessor of Jasper County. So, they were prominent people. Ransom Jeremy Jones also had three sons who made preachers. They all came from a Methodist background and were all Methodists. Lazarus Jackson Jones was a Congregational Methodist and so was Henry Tecumseh Jones. Henry Tecumseh was known for his preaching Hellfire and damnation, and ended his sermons by warning people that if they didn't change their way of living, they would go to Hell. They called him 'Hell and Damnation Jones'. He founded the Congregational Methodist Church in Mississippi. Then he left the state and returned to Georgia -- I want to say Cobb County, Georgia, but I'm not sure of the county. Anyway, he left here and went to Georgia and edited the paper for the Congregational Methodist Churches throughout the United States. He was a prominent person.

We had already been searching for information on Alfred M. and Hulda (Jones) Purvis, our great-grandparents, and now we began looking for them in earnest. By the way, Hulda Purvis had four given names and we found her in four different censuses. In one census was listed as Hulda B. A. Purvis and we knew that was her. We never did find where they were buried. We

do know that Alfred Purvis died between 1906 and 1907. We have a description of the land he owned, and it's possible that he was buried on his land, but we don't know as we've never found his marked grave.

Let me tell you about his land patent. He had to prove that he had lived on this land for five years to establish his ownership. He had to have witnesses to prove this and the value of any improvements he had made on the place. He had one dwelling house, a smokehouse, crib and stables, and all this was worth the tremendous value of \$200! He had twenty-one acres under cultivation on which he grew corn, cotton, peas, potatoes and rice. (What happened to all the rice production in Mississippi? They used to grow a lot of rice in Jasper County.)

He was interesting to me about how he moved around from one plot of ground to another. I called him a nomad when I was doing all this because I couldn't keep up with him. He sold one plot just a day or two after he got it. He got it approved and then he sold it. He probably had a sale for it already but had to get it approved. Every time he moved, we could trace him on the map. I've got maps with his land identified on them, and you can trace him going up and down Tallahallee Creek. The reason for that was so he could grow his rice. The land was fertile near the creek, a wide fertile area almost like the Mississippi delta.

In looking over the Purvis land grant, there is an interesting thing about his home. It is described as being a dwelling house 16 by 18 feet, made of peeled pine logs and habitable at all seasons of the year. The dwelling was valued at about \$40 and the crib was valued at \$15, stables at \$5. The total worth was about \$75. The dwelling was first put up by Henry Dixon, a colored man. The land was actually worth about \$1.25 an acre. This tells us something about the value of things in Jasper County in 1882 and 1885.

Next we began our search for the Henry family. We found them in Jasper County in 1850 and learned that my great-grandfather, James Henry, had married Emiline Owens. It was no problem to find them. Living next door to them was a Catherine Barner. This was interesting because we had interviewed an old lady, a distant cousin of my dad's, who had told us that her great-grandmother was named Catherine, but that was all she knew about her. She told us that her grandfather, Frank Barner, was a half-brother to our great-grandfather, so we knew we had found the right Catherine when we found Charles and Catherine Barner with their children, Frank and Rebecca Barner. Listed with their children were two other daughters that we didn't know about. We've never been able to find them in any other records, except one, named Sarah, who was still living with her parents in the 1860 census. We were never able to come up to what happened to these two girls.

You've asked me how I became interested in family history... Once I read a little poem about that which said there was a genealogy pox that grew on people. I told my sister that we sure have a good case of it!

To get started, first you write down your name and when and where you were born. Then write down your parents' names and when they were born and where they were born. Place is as important as time. If you don't know what your grandparents' names are in full, ask your parents, if they are living, or go to the cemetery records or marriage records, but find out their full names. This is important because they didn't always use the same name on census or marriage records.

Next, after you find the names and dates of your grandparents on both sides of your family, you go backwards to find the next generation. If you are doing both sides, you may want to do your paternal side first and then your maternal side. I would advise anybody to do just one side at a time, although that is not what I did. Because my mother wanted me to do her side, I started on my father's side, and when my mother asked me to do her side, it got me off. It's taken me a long time to try to do two sides at once, and all the other lines that along with it. It's a real venture to get into.

We found that on my mother's side, I just want to mention this, her ancestors had signed a petition for Mississippi to become a state. I'm proud of that!

Your grandparents, if they are still living, can tell their parents' names, if you are lucky. Write down when and where they were born. They may not have been born in Wayne, Jasper, or Clarke Counties, but may have come from the Carolinas, or from Virginia, Tennessee, Kentucky, or even Ohio. You never know, so ask!

I mentioned Emiline Owens a while ago. The only thing we know about her father is that his name was Peter N. Owens, and that he was born in Maryland. He was listed in the 1830 Monroe County, Alabama census. I found other Owens families there in the 1830 census, but none that were his father, so that's still a puzzle. You'll find a lot of puzzles as you go along. As you work backwards, you'll find that many people came down through the Carolinas, but most often they started out from Virginia.

We find that many of the older ones we find will have fought in the Revolutionary War, and you might be able to find some enlightenment in the Revolutionary records. You may find even before that where they served in the Colonial Militia. You know, kind of like our National Guard used to be. It can be most interesting go back and back.

When you get as far as you can go in the United States, then you will have to determine when they arrived and where did they come from. You might think you won't want to go back that far, but if you ever get into it like I have, you'll want to know. I still don't know, but I intend to find out one day.

The best experience I had was the one I described a while ago when I found my great-great-grandfather Jeremiah Hamilton Jones. Because I had proof then of who he was so I could continue to work backwards. It gave me the link I needed. You'll find these things and you'll be happy over them, too, as you go along. Sometimes you may be in a cemetery when you find it, the link you've been looking for. The tombstone may say, "Husband of So and So" that gives you the clue you need. Many times they write on the stone who their spouse was and I like that. I wish people still did it.

My grandfather James Henry did finally settle in Wayne County, near the Jones and Jasper County lines, up in the corner where he lived for a time in the Pleasantville Community. Most of my family seem to have settled in Jasper and Jones Counties, and of course, in Scott County. I think the reason for this was the opening of the Indian lands there. They had been in South Carolina and Georgia up until that time, except for the two or three years they spent in Alabama. My dad had told me that his grandparents had lived in Alabama for a while. They more than likely married in Alabama as my great-grandmother, Emiline Owens Henry, had been born in Alabama. But so far we've been unable to determine that, but it leads me to think that possibly the Henrys did settle there for a while, long enough for James to court and marry Emiline.

I think the Henrys lived in Scott County in 1840 but moved to Jasper County before 1850. As you know, the Indian lands opened north of the Wayne County line in 1833 after the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek. This new land included Jasper, Smith, Newton and Clarke County and several more Mississippi counties; I'm not sure of all of them. But they opened up on the north for settlement and a lot of people came from the Carolinas at that time, and a lot of people in Wayne County, Mississippi, moved up to Jasper County to take advantage of the new land sales. Getting back to my mother's side a little, her great-grandparents and great-great grandparents were living in Jasper County during the 1850 census, and were listed again in the 1850 Wayne County census, so they must have moved that summer. The census enumerators begin in June and ended whenever they get through, sometimes as late as October or November.

The oldest living member of the Henry family is my dad's brother, Jefferson Henry, or Jeff, for short. He is 97 years old now, but at times he's still alert and can talk with you with real

understanding and comprehension. At other times he's not so alert and he can't talk to you about things. He goes back in time and that sort of thing, but he's in Northside Haven Nursing Home at Pleasant Hill. He and his wife are both there. In fact, another sister of my dad's is also there. Let me tell you this; there are seven of my dad's family still living, ranging from 77 to 97 years old. In other words, the oldest and the youngest.

Another thing you might find interesting is that you'll find there are certain heredity diseases that come down through families. Diabetes is one of them and heart disease is another. Since we are dealing with my daddy's side of the family, I'll tell you this. He has lost several members, in fact, all of the members of his family that have died, except one, with diabetes. (The youngest one died with pneumonia when she was 18.) As an overweight person, that concerns me. I'm working on that, now.

In my mother's family, it's heart disease and strokes. We have to recognize these things early in life so we can try to prevent them, if we can. You may think, what's this doing in family history? It is a part of family history and just about all of your genealogists, include this type of information. I have a niece that married a man that comes from a family with kidney disease. It's not the same as diabetes, but every generation has it. If there's four children in the family, probably one of them, at least, will have it. I learned something new just last week from a friend of mine. She said she has the potential of becoming the recipient of a lung disease that's hereditary. I don't know the name of the disease, but that's another thing we need to know about. She said that the doctors tell her because she was conceived during the time that her father's disease was at its peak, that she will most likely develop it. That's sad, but interesting.

I have my great-grandfather Henry's Confederate War Record which I found interesting. This enabled me to get into the United Daughters of the Confederacy, which I had wanted to do since I was a little girl. I had asked my dad many times what his granddaddy looked like. Daddy told me my great-granddaddy Purvis was named Alford, and my great-granddaddy Henry was named Jim. That was what they called him. No where I looked could I find the name Jim, the nickname for James, until I went to the war records.

I had a quite a lot of searching to do because there were seventeen James Henrys from the state of Mississippi in the Civil War. I kept on looking. Then dad told me that his grandfather had gone off to the war when his son, (Dad's father), George Phillip Henry, was just two weeks old. That gave me a time, as I knew my grandfather's birth date. I then wrote a letter to the State Archives in Jackson and it wasn't long until I had my answer, a copy of my great grandfather's record. He had willingly left his family to fight in the war, and had been on the company muster roll from September 30 to October 31 in 1862, which accounted for his training time, but he didn't actually enlist until November 7, 1862. The sad thing was that he never received a penny for all his service time or for a clothing allowance. He was in the siege of Vicksburg and was captured when Vicksburg fell on July 4, 1863. He was paroled on July 10 and was sent home, but he died with pneumonia on his way home so his burying place isn't known. I got permission from Philadelphia Church in Heidelberg in Jasper County to put up a marker as a memorial to him. We didn't know his resting place, so we put his marker beside that of his wife's, Emiline Henry. The marker was provided for him through the Veteran's Service.

I have an affidavit here on his wife, Emiline, where she had to prove that she was his widow when she asked for a pension, along with her late husband's back pay and clothing allowance. She was finally paid for his eight months and eight days of service at \$11 per month. They paid her \$92.50 for his clothing allowance, but she had to wait until Feb. 4, 1864 to get this. It was along time that she and their children had to live without any help. I'm sure that friends and neighbors helped out the widow who was left in poor financial condition.

This information told me something about my great grandfather Henry that I would never had know otherwise, because my grandfather, you see, didn't knew what his father looked like because he was just two weeks old when he went away. The Confederate records show that James Henry, at age 39, had blue eyes and light hair. He had a fair complexion and stood 5 feet, 9 inches tall, and was born in South Carolina. The family didn't even know that much.

I really felt like I had something when I got this. You gain a lot of information through the study of these things, if you take time to go over them. And, like I say, this document got me into the United Daughters of the Confederacy, to which I still belong.

I think the worst experience I've had was when I received a bill from the U.S. Land Patent Office for \$60. I had written for five or six patents of land on Jeremiah H. Jones. Another patent I had (on Alford Purvis) just cost me a small copy fee because a friend had gotten it. I'm sure she didn't pay the kind of price I paid. I got a single sheet of paper, 8 ½ x 11, on five patents, that cost me \$60. I just wrote them a check, sent it to them, and chalked it up to bad experience. That was the worst experience I've had.

I classify myself as a genealogist, although I'm not registered. You see some of the sources have used here. There's quite a stack of them. This book lists different historical and genealogical societies throughout the United States -- there's a lot of them. I've written to several and have received some good help but from some I've received nothing because they didn't have what I needed. It is divided into the different states and it's easy to find, and then there's a list of reference books in it, too, biographies and ethnic groups, and military references. There's a religious reference and addresses where you can write to different states where you may write for information. Here's a book that is one of the best ones, *Where To Write For Birth and Death Records through the United States and Outlying Areas*, which is put out by the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare. They also put out *Where To Write for Marriage Records* of the United States. You know, in Mississippi, you write to the Bureau of Vital Statistics in Jackson. Then here's this little book, *Genealogical Bibliography of Materials owned by the East Mississippi Regional Library*. This is the Feb. 1981 Edition. This gives quite a bit of information about what is available through the library. Anything that is on this list we can order through our Waynesboro Library. If our library doesn't have it, they can borrow it from the Quitman or Meridian Libraries. Heidelberg is on that list, too. We have done quite a bit of traveling to different local libraries and run up quite a bill for gas.

And then there are the Confederate resources. There is the *Confederate Military History*, twelve volumes of it, that was published in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1899. I found this in a private library in Natchez. I gained a little there on my husband's family, but none on my own. And there's an index to the *Confederate States of America*, and of course, Mississippi, on microfilm, that was real helpful. I found there a J. H. Jones that may have been Jeremiah, but it may not have been. He was rejected on a surgeon's certificate in 1862. There's a lot of information to be found if you have a Confederate in your ancestry, so by all means don't be afraid to use the microfilm. I don't know where the library gets it from, but we pay \$4 a roll for them to rent it from somewhere. Wayne County has a good genealogical library and has some very hospitable helpers there. They don't know much about genealogy but they certainly make you feel welcome to use the materials.

We've made many friends through our study of genealogy and have come to know many people we would have never known. It's been an experience I've enjoyed.

I'd like to talk a little more about my great-grandmother, Hulda B. (Purvis) Jones. I told you she had four given names. We think the B. stood for Bethia because that was her mother's name. We'll say it was Hulda Bethia Alice Abiline Jones. She was born about 1835 and was married in Scott County [Miss.] during the summer when she was fifteen. Her first child was

born in September of 1850, so I would presume she had been married about a year. Her next children were John Hamilton, Hiram Wright, Miranda, William Riley and Bethia Alice (whom was called Allie), Mary Frances (whom was called Molly), and Nancy Catherine (whom we found as Melissa C. the first time, so apparently she had three names, Melissa Nancy Catherine.) This last was my grandmother whom they called Cathy.

Cathy married George Phillip Henry, the son of James Henry, the Confederate soldier I told you about. Nancy Catherine -- Cathy -- was born in Jasper County on the 27th of October, 1869, and died the 4th of March in 1944. She's buried in Jones County at Sandersville in the Evader Cemetery. George Phillip Henry was born the 20th of September, 1862 in Jasper County and died the 1st of September in 1943 in Jones County. He, too, was buried in Evader Cemetery.

The reason I'm telling you where they are buried, you'll find, as you start your genealogy, that this is as important as the day they were born. You'll find so much from cemetery records. I've visited a lot of cemeteries, a lot of courthouses, a lot of libraries, and I actually found more concrete information in Cemeteries. A lot of times the date may be off a year or two because so many times they didn't keep good records and their families would forget how old they were. I've found that old maids and widows were the best at forgetting their age than anyone else. George Phillip Henry's mother, Emiline Owens Henry, never gave her age the same. So we can learn a lot from cemeteries.

When you think of sources and this sort of thing, I think of Mr. H. H. Daniels in Jasper County. He compiled a list of all the cemeteries, the people buried in Jasper County prior to 1915. That's a great source of genealogical help if you need to look in Jasper County. It saves a lot of time tromping through overgrown cemeteries and bouts with wasps and yellow jackets. I've been to cemeteries where yellow jackets were just working alive.

The old Paulding Cemetery in Jasper County, the first time I went to it, was in one big mess. There were trees, I would say, two feet across, that were in the graves, grown up in the graves. It had not been cleaned and taken care of in many years. But the last time I was there, I was amazed to see that the timber had been cleared out and it had been cleaned off, and there was a fence around it. I understand that Mr. Reed in Paulding is responsible for having it done, and I really appreciate his doing it because it really needed to be done.

I can't mention Paulding without thinking of my dad talking of going to Paulding when he was a young man. That's one reason I was drawn to Jasper County in the first place, was from hearing Daddy talk about it. He was born in Jasper County and lived there as a young man. He didn't marry until he was about 27, or 28, so he had a lot of time to get around the county.

He knew a lot of people and had worked at different jobs there. He was a logger by trade and he filed saws and that sort of thing, and he farmed. His roots were deep in Jasper County and I'd heard him talk so much about Paulding till I wanted to go there. I thought I was going to see a big town. Have you been there? You need to go. There's a big historical marker on the courthouse lawn that states that Paulding was "The Queen City of the East".

There's an old jail, I understand it's still there. I've got pictures of it somewhere. The old jail remains as it was back in the old days. It has not been changed. It's still there, and Jasper County, like Jones County, has two courthouses. There's one in Paulding and one in Bay Springs. I've been to both several times. At this time of year when wisteria starts to bloom, I have to go to Paulding. It's an unwritten rule, I have to go. Something draws me there. The wisteria is abundant at Paulding, and as you drive through by the cemetery, there is a wall of wisteria growing up in the big tall trees, the most beautiful sight you've ever seen.

As you learn your family history, you will learn some geographical history, too. You'll learn that you didn't come out from under a cabbage leaf; you had ancestors and they are interesting. If you find skeletons in your closet, don't ignore them. They are there, a part of your

history, don't be ashamed of them because there is nothing you can do about it. They serve to make your history that much more colorful.

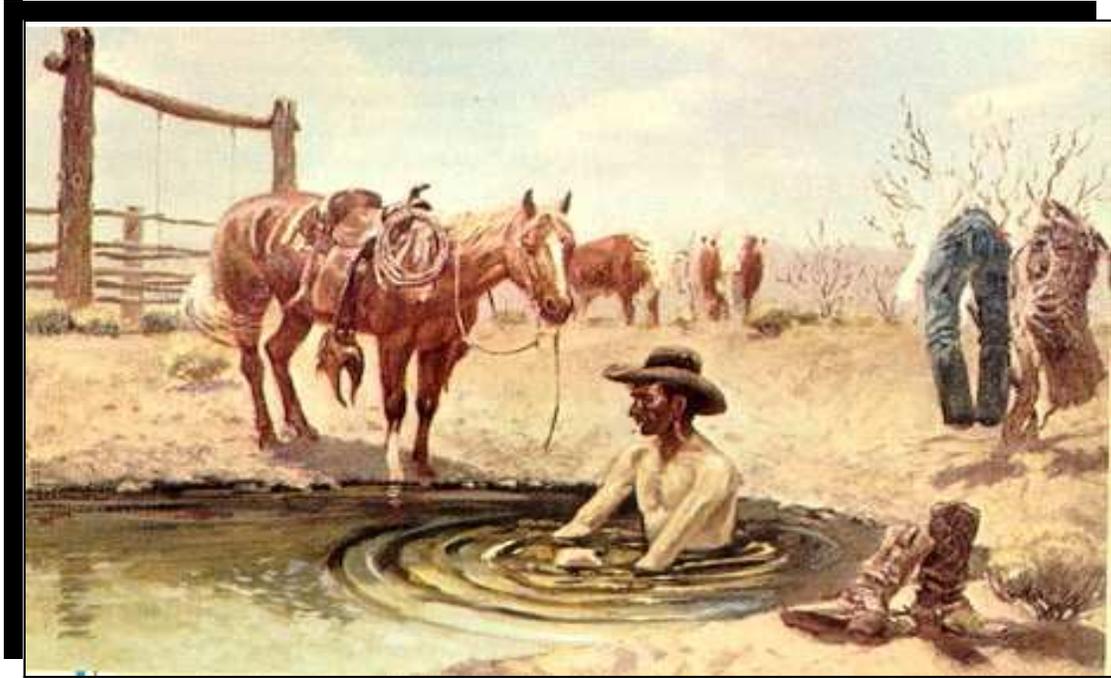
Let's say, for instance, if someone in your family had an illegitimate child. Let me tell you, it was no more unusual then than it is now. Because I found many cases of that in my studies of the history of Jasper, Jones, and Wayne Counties. It was not unusual. People were the same now as they were then, only the times have changed. We've got more conveniences, we've got more places to go and more things to do, but basically, people are the same. If you find an illegitimate child, don't leave him out. He's a part of your family, a part of your history. The descendants of that child can't help what happened. He will want to know about his family, too. Just remember, don't play favorites. Don't put more into one than you do the other. Be good to all of them.

MURPHY'S 12 LAWS AS APPLIED TO GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH

1. The family you are looking for will be on the last page of the unindexed (of course) census film that you check. However, if you begin at the end of the roll, they will be on page one.
2. The microfilm that you have diligently searched page-by-page will have an index at the end.
3. All of your spouse's ancestors will be mentioned in county histories. None of yours will be.
4. If you need just one record, the microfilm will have page numbers. If you need 3 or more records, there won't be any page numbers and the records will be in proper order.
5. The book you need most will be out being rebound.
6. You will need item 23 on a microfilm roll that has 22 items. The rest of the film is continued on another roll that will not be in the drawer, and the librarian will tell you that it is "missing, and presumed lost."
7. Just before the entry you need, the records will end. They will begin again two years after the date you need.
8. If one brother is left out of the genealogy of family, guess whose ancestor he will be?
9. If there's a family history on one branch of the family-it won't be yours.
10. When you finally find the microfilmed probate records of your missing link to a rich and/or famous line, the book will be so tightly bound that you can only make out the first two letters of the name of the one who MAY be your ancestor.
11. The researcher you hire to read the original records at the courthouse will inform you that only the particular probate packet you need is missing.
12. During the last hour of your trip to the Family history Library in Salt Lake City you will find everything you've hunted all week for, but you won't have time to copy it.

From *Frameworks*, newsletter of Family Research Assn of Miss.

McCracken and McLaughlin Family History



Taped interview: March 15, 1989.

Interviewer: Geoff McCracken, son of interviewee.

Interviewee: William G. "Bill" McCracken

Location: 14 Teche Road,
Morgan City, LA.

D.O.B.: October 15, 1935

Well, son, our family has some interesting aspects. Your grandpa was just a cowboy, but your great-great-great-great-grandpa's father was one of the leaders of the Irish rebellion in Northern Ireland in 1798. Then, from my mother's side, we have sixteen forebearers who fought in the American Revolution, and she has, or I should say WE have, forefathers who were here before 1700 in the United States, or what is now the United States.

Our direct forebearers, two McCracken brothers, came to America in 1797. One McCracken was named Henry, the other was named Alexander. My sister, your Aunt Alice, has traced our family history; she went to Northern Ireland to look it up. From what is known, these boys' father was a man by the name of Henry Joey McCracken. After their mother died, the boys came to the United States, but their father stayed behind in Ireland. He was a wool merchant -- I want to make that known because that's going to come up again.

Henry Joey McCracken, a Presbyterian, founded the first Presbyterian Sunday School in Belfast, Ulster County, Ireland. Belfast is the name of the town where they are still having trouble today between the Irish Presbyterians, the Irish Catholics, and the English. At any rate, they formed a coalition, the United Irishmen, made up of Irish Catholics, Episcopalians, Methodist, and Presbyterians, who wanted to drive the English out. In 1798, Henry Joey McCracken, father of the two young men who had gone to America, led an army of 3000 Irishmen against the British, but was soundly defeated and captured. They hung him in the square in Belfast as a revolutionary. He is still a hero in Northern Ireland. If you went to Belfast in Northern Ireland and mentioned his name, people would know who were talking about, and would be joyous to see a descendant of his. This I've picked up from a couple of books I've read.

His two sons, like I said, came to the United States in 1797. Henry went to an area around Pittsburgh to settle. The other son, Alexander McCracken, moved on west in search of cheap land and bought a farm just north of Cincinnati, Ohio. He married and had two children, a boy and a girl, and settled in southwestern Ohio. He and his wife both died shortly after they settled, leaving their two children orphans. The girl was taken in to live with cousins, on her mother's side of the family, in what has now become Indiana. The boy went back to Pittsburgh to work with his Uncle Henry. His name was William McCracken, which just happens to be my name.

William grew up in Pittsburgh where he became a blacksmith. In 1809 he decided that he was going to go west to find his sister. He set out walking along the old National Road west from Pittsburgh (which is now Interstate 70) and came to a little town called Cambridge, Ohio, seat of Guernsey County, (the town where I was raised). His uncle had apprenticed him to a blacksmith and was now a blacksmith by trade. They needed a blacksmith in Cambridge and persuaded William to stay. So he did.

When William came, there were two churches in Cambridge, Ohio. When William's grandfather, Henry Joel McCracken was captured by the British there was a Methodist and an Episcopalian who had been in the revolt with him. They were offered amnesty if they would tell who their leader was, and they did. So, when William found out the only local churches were Methodist and Episcopalian, he wouldn't worship there. He worshiped in his own home for eleven years until they established a Presbyterian church, until, in fact, he got one established in Cambridge. He was pretty stubborn about his religion. They founded the first Presbyterian

church in that area in 1820. The church that is there today is the First United Presbyterian Church which stands on the ground of the original church. The site of the church was donated by old William McCracken and the brick from the original church, which can be seen behind today's church in the one old building still standing, was also donated by him. The reason we know so much about him is because he was very meticulous and kept accounts of all his business dealings. One of his account books was found about forty-five years ago, so we know quite a bit about him.

William built up a business in Cambridge and as it flourished, he got married and had two children. Their names, like William's father and uncle, were Alexander and Henry McCracken. Young Alexander McCracken became a prominent Cambridge businessman, but Henry, wanting to be a farmer, went west of town where he married and purchased a farm and proceeded to raise a family. But Henry, like his father, died and left children to be raised by his brother Alex. Yes, Henry McCracken's family was raised by his brother, Alexander McCracken.

Alexander and his son, the man who was your great-great-grandfather, started a bank in Cambridge, Ohio. It was called the McCracken Bank which traded heavily in wool. Right after the Civil War there was a tremendous decline in wool prices and everybody who were depositors in the bank lost all their money, along with Alexander McCracken and son.

Now, you see, up until that time, for instance, before the war in the 1860's, Alexander and his father, William, owned 14% of all the building lots, and lots with buildings on them in Cambridge, which, at that time, had a population of about 6,000 to 7,000 people. They were wealthy and had quite a bit of money. That's why they bought the bank. Then – I can't for the life of me remember my grandfather's father's name. He was Alexander McCracken's son, but I can't remember his name exactly; I think it might have been Henry II.

Anyway, after the bank collapsed, Alexander died a few years later and his son (Henry?) went out into the country and farmed. They had lost all their money because they attempted to pay back all their depositors and had to sell their land to do it. Broken in spirit, Alexander died of what you would call a broken heart. His old father, William, outlived him, living to be 81.

My own grandfather, William Rainey McCracken, son of the Henry McCracken that went out on the farm, was also a farmer and traded in wool. Trading in wool -- the reason I said that you would hear this later on -- had kind of been the family trade from back in Ireland when they bought and sold wool. In fact, Henry Joel McCracken, years earlier in Ireland, had his own boat and traded in wool, loading his boat with wool to trade and taking it to different ports in England and Scotland. He bought wool from Scotland and ran it down the coast to English towns to sell.

Grandfather didn't do much of any consequence all his life, pretty much like me. His children were Ray, Charlie, and Fred McCracken, and two daughters. He had no grandsons in the family at all except for Ray's son, me. I was the only grandson, so therefore, it was pretty well up to me to carry on the McCracken name. I've pretty well done this, as I have four McCracken sons.

A McCracken family trait that seems to have survived all through the years has been their very good sense of humor. All my forebearers that I knew of had a sense of humor. I've read accounts of William McCracken where he was a joyful person, which means you have a good sense of humor. And they had a fierce independence -- none of us can stand to have another human being telling us what to do. We just flat out don't like it. And a sense of independence -- we'll take care of ourselves and solve our own problems. I suppose that probably comes from having a lot of confidence. I don't know if it's just talk or if it comes to us through our genes, but we've always been that way from everything that I can see that's gone on in the past. It's like your grandfather, my father, only had one job in his life where he had to work with somebody

coming in to inspect what he did. He stayed with it about three days and then he left. From that time on he always pretty well worked for himself and ended up being a funeral director.

Let's switch over to my mother's side of the family. Her maiden name was Grove. I don't know a whole lot about the Groves, that would be your great-grandfather. I know that they were Dutch and when they first came to the United States their name was Graff. They lived in an area in Maryland that was Dutch, but after the American Revolution, for some reason or other, to be Dutch wasn't popular so they changed their name from Graff to Grove. Graff means Grove in English.

When your grandfather was eighteen years old he went to the 1876 centennial celebration in Philadelphia. There he met a cattle trail boss from Fort Worth, that drove cattle herds up the Abilene trail from Texas to Abilene, Kansas. This old trail boss told him stories about the cattle drives and all, and he got the desire to go out there. The man told him that if he came out to Fort Worth and looked him up, he would give him a job. So he went back home, a little town in eastern Ohio called Adena, gathered up his things and went west to look for this man.

Out in Texas, he got a job driving cattle north on the great cattle drives they used to have out of Fort Worth up to Abilene, at first, but then they began going to Dodge City, Kansas, when the railhead opened there. They would drive the cattle from Texas to Dodge City to be loaded onto railroad cars to go to Chicago to be butchered. He was in Dodge City at the time of Wyatt Earp and Bat Masterson and Doc Holliday, and all these fellows you see in the movies.

He stayed out west about fifteen years. Nobody really knows a whole lot about what he did when he was out there, except that he was he was a cowboy. When he wasn't driving cattle north, he worked on a ranch.

An old man from their area (in Ohio) once told me that when he was a boy, that this man who had been out west, used to wake the whole town in the middle of the night, racing his horse up and down the street. So, Grandpa Grove must have been a wild cuss, as folks just didn't ride your horses in the middle of the night in those days. He did because that was the way he probably rode out west.

Grandpa Grove had bought a farm out in Kansas when he thought he was going to settle down. He came back to his home town in Ohio to look for a bride where he married my grandmother. He took her back to Kansas to settle on his farm, on which he hadn't built a house yet, or anything. She took one look at her surroundings, got back on the train and returned to Ohio. So, he sold his farm and came back to Ohio, too, where he settled down and became a carpenter. He built houses for a living. He built and sold them and did miscellaneous carpentry work.

Like Grandma Grove, Grandpa was a staunch Presbyterian and became elder and trustee of First United Presbyterian Church in Adena, Ohio [Jefferson Co.] for a number of years. He did repair work and took care of the church for no charge. That was his ministry. I suspect that he was well paid when other Presbyterians needed carpentry work and brought it to him. He died three years before I was born so I never did meet him. My father said he got tired of hearing my grandmother, so he just decided to die!

Grandmother Grove had been a McLaughlin; that is where all those revolutionary veterans in the family came from. They had come originally come over from Scotland around 1710. or around that time. The story goes in our family that while our family didn't come over on the Mayflower, McLaughlin was a banker in Scotland who put up money to help finance the Mayflower's journey. My mother tells that story. She was quite proud of her heritage because of the fact that she had so many ancestors who fought in the Revolutionary War. And also, her great-great-grandfather (maybe there should be three 'greats' there), was the elected representative from their area in Ohio and attended the Constitutional Convention in Ohio that

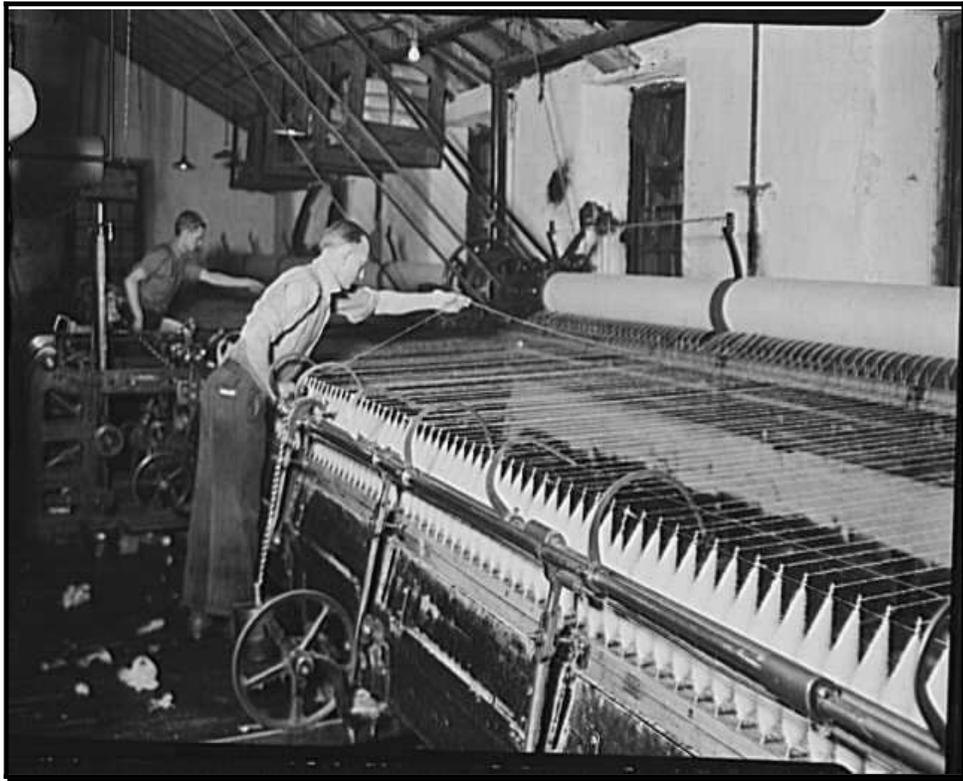
established the Ohio Constitution when Ohio became a state back in -- I believe it was in 1810. The situation was that he went to the first two constitutional meetings, he being an elected representative to the territorial legislature. Then his wife was going to have a baby and he couldn't go to the last one so he appointed a man to go in his place. That was the one where they ratified the constitution so that fellow had his name on it and McLaughlin didn't. McLaughlin had already signed it as he had been party to the authorship of the constitution.

The McLaughlins have always been scholars and attorneys. A number of college professors and a number of lawyers and bankers are in her family. I think there were three members of the Ohio State Legislature and I know of three Federal Court of Appeals Judges, and also, like I said, a number of attorneys. My mother always said they were great thinkers, but they never put thought to mind about making money! They were the kind of people that like to be in the middle of running the show. They were intelligent. Highly intelligent. They were voracious readers. Everybody I ever knew in my mother's family always had their nose stuck in a book. Education was probably the number one priority amongst the McLaughlin family. They were high on education and higher education. Even the girls, in the days when it wasn't popular for girls to go to college, went to college for a year or two. They might not have graduated, but they would go for a year or two.

Well, Geoff, it has been interesting. There are a number of other things that could have been said, but just talking off the top of my head, this pretty well gives you an encapsulated view of our family history. Our family in a nutshell -- along with the other nuts!

[Transcriber's Note: I could not understand the surname of the grandmother's side of the family. The best I could tell it was "McLaughlin", but it could have been "McGlothlin". I would suggest that in the future the interviewers spell out the names of towns and family names to make sure they are recorded accurately for history ...]

ADAPTING TO CHANGE IN TRAVELERS' REST, SOUTH CAROLINA



Taped Interview: February 17, 1989.
Interviewer: Steve McManus, Interviewee's grandson.
Interviewee: Christie Mae Darnell Brown
Location: 400 Frank Brown Drive,
Traveler's Rest, S.C.
D.O.B.: July 3, 1916

I came from a family of twelve children; had eleven brothers and sisters. Our parents, the Darnells, were farmers and we did all kinds of farm work. We grew wheat, corn, cotton, potatoes, cabbage, anything you would grow in a regular garden. We had cows, chickens, hogs. We raised everything we ate, but we never did have no money, anyway, back in those days. If we would go to the store to buy anything, it was maybe coffee and some sugar, although we had our own bees that made honey to sweeten with. We even drank tea sweetened with honey back then. It was good! My mother would make all kind of cakes and sweeten them with honey.]

We grew most everything we needed on our farm. It was a big farm. We grew over 100 bushels of wheat every year. We grew corn. We made our lard, seasoned everything with it. Chickens we raised, so we had eggs. We always had milk and butter. We had three cows to milk so some would always be ready to give milk and butter. We hardly ever sold any cows but we would swap them back and forth to get a younger one or something like that.

We planted our wheat in the fall of the year. We had no combines then. When the wheat got ripe Daddy would go out there and cut it and then we'd have to stack it so they could haul it to the house. Dad would call the thrashers to come in to thrash the grain. They'd have a big machine, something like a big tractor, or something, that come in to do the thrashing. It was some kind of machine; you fed the grain in there and it would thrash it out. We'd take the wheat to the market, to the mill, and they would grind it and separate it. The husks would go in one place and the other would go in another place to have flour made from it.

We always saved some back for seed for next year. The same way with our garden. Like beans and everything, and potatoes. We kept seed from year to year so each year we didn't have to go buy it. We always had big fields.

One thing my daddy trained me to do was work. To use a big [Inaudible. Oxen?] You'd have to train them to hitch them up to a plow, or to a wagon, to work them. During the Depression we lived in Anderson County, South Carolina, with Mother and Daddy, of course. We had a lot of food on hand and relatives, brothers and sisters of Mama and Dad, made what we called "meal deals" back in those days. They didn't have anywhere to grow food so they would come out on the weekend to our house. I've heard Mama say that her brother-in-law, Dad's brother, that if it hadn't been for her his family would have starved. Mama would always give them vegetables, chickens, and eggs, and milk and butter, because we had plenty. They didn't have anywhere to raise them and they didn't have no work, either. They helped support a lot of their family when they come on the weekend, and then they would come back the next week-end. It went on that way for a long time.

Nobody had any money. I remember one time as a child, Dad said, "Mae, this is the last dime in the house. Now you go to the store and get me some tobacco. Hold onto that dime because that's my last one, and I want some tobacco. I'd just as soon go without biscuit as tobacco."

I held onto that dime going up the road to the store, which was just a very short piece from our house. Then I started throwin' it up in the air and catching it, like a child will do, and it fell into a mud puddle. I worked for hours tryin' to find that dime, but I never found it. [Laughter] I

didn't get a whipping but I'll never forget that day the longest day on Earth I live. I'll never forget that dime.

We lived in Anderson County until I was fourteen. We moved to Greenville County when I was fourteen years of age and I've been in Greenville County ever since.

During the Depression we didn't have a lot of money but we never went hungry like a lot of people did. Those that didn't have no way of raising food and didn't have money to buy it, were in bad shape. There was always a market for the cotton we raised, but we didn't sell wheat, corn, and potatoes. Dad always had a half-acre of sweet potatoes and a half-acre of Irish potatoes but we kept all that for family use.

We vegetable-farmed in Greenville County and sold a lot of vegetables. We had big acres of onions and beans. That's what we grew them for, to sell them to help support the family, which was necessary. That's why we had so many hogs when I was growing up. My daddy liked to have a lot of hogs.

It was toward the latter part of the Depression when I finished high school in Greenville County. I graduated in May and married in December in 1934. When World War II started, I had three brothers that went off to the war. All three of them. One was in the infantry, one was in -- well, they were all three in the Army. One operated an aircraft gun and the other one was in supplies. One went to the Pacific and the other two went over to Germany.

I had two brothers that were wounded -- Osburn [Name not clear: could be Osburn, Oscar, or Osmer.] in the Pacific had busted eardrums and Boyce had his foot shot all to pieces in France, just three miles from the Rhine River. He went to cross a little road, something like our dirt roads here, and he said that they told them crawl across but he played it smart, he jumped across. When he jumped it hit him in the foot and blew it off. Boyce came back from service -- it was a wonderful time when he came home -- but Ray had to stay in Austria a year after the war ended. Ray had been behind Boyce operating an anti-aircraft gun when he heard that his brother had been hit. He walked nine miles to where Boyce was supposed to be, but when he got there they had already shipped Boyce home.

Back home, we kept on farming during the war. The churches here stayed open day and night so people could go to pray. We didn't have to lock things up because people didn't steal back then like they do now. We had a lot of prayer meetings in homes and that type of thing. The community seemed to draw closer and took care of each other during the war. I don't remember how many families there were but I remember five, right close, that had sons in World War II. When the Korean War came along there were more that left home.

The day Boyce was wounded they brought a telegram to Mama and Dad. They received a letter from him the same day, telling that he was wounded, but he was okay, it was just that his foot had been shot off. They brought him back to Moores in North Carolina where he stayed a good while, but had to go back to the hospital several times to have pins taken out of his foot. He still has trouble with that foot.

Boyce is still living, but Ray and Osburn(?) both are done passed on, but not from service wounds. I still have a letter from one of them; the rest got burned up in my house I had out here. They were sent V-mail from overseas. They censored all mail coming from overseas.

I will never forget the day that Normandy was invaded -- where I was at, know all about it. Yes, I remember it well. We were in a big field we had over there, picking beans.

My sister Lake didn't do anything during the war because her husband worked in the mill. The only thing she did was just keep house and raise the children. You know, my mother had three daughters living and two others that died in childhood. The three of us that lived had seven children apiece. I lost a child, a nineteen year old boy, and Lake lost a baby that was born dead. Grace still has all seven of her children.

There was only Peanut left at home with Mama and Daddy during the war. He lived at home and worked at the Jutson [Judson?] mill -- the Weaver and Jutson[?] mill. They've had textile mills in Greenville County for years. That's how most of the people made their living until about four years ago. The mills started disappearing, you know, one at a time. Two in Greenville, the City of Greenville, and one in the Greenville area that I know are still there. Most of them's closed.

I was mother to seven children, but I only have five during the war. I had two boys, Jerry and Ronnie. One was born in 1946 who we named after my brother that went of f to sea. Ronnie, he was. He came back from service when our Ronnie was six weeks old and had the whooping cough. He was a very sick boy. I had the two girls later.

After the war, about 1946-'47, we quit farming, and your Pawpaw went to cutting pulpwood. Then he went into electrical work. Then he went to carpentry. We stopped farming when the children got older. When they were little they would work in the field and help a lot, but after they got larger they began to have things they wanted to do. The boys went off to town and got jobs in grocery stores on weekends and in the summer. They could work all summer but I wouldn't let them work during school week. I thought they should be getting their lessons and things like that.

They had to support themselves -- help support themselves. They had to pay for their lunch at school and buy clothes, extra clothes. They realized what a dollar was about. That was the deal when they went to work. Back in those days you had to wear hand-me-downs. You didn't go to the store every day to get a new piece of clothing.

Frankie went into the Army when he finished high school. I wanted him to go on to college, but he joined the Army for three years. While he was gone, all four of my boys at home wore the same size pants and shirts. When Frankie came back three years later he said that his old shirts were still good. I said they sure were, and with everyone else wearing them all the time he was gone, too.

As they got older, Leonard 'shot up' and his pants got too long for the others to wear, and theirs were too short for him. They could still wear the same size shirts and they mixed up whatever they had. Whatever they had, whichever was clean, they wore it.

Your Pawpaw cut pulpwood that he bought from other people. Sometimes he'd hire people to help him cut and haul it. He would buy it from their boundary and pay them so much a cord. He sold it to Pacific. They would bring a train up on the railroad tracks and he'd load his wood onto the cars. Most of his wood was then hauled to Marietta. Sometimes he and just our boys cut, but sometimes he would have hired help. Well, he always had some hired hands. Not too many, somewhere about three. It was him and just one man, mostly.

I stayed at home until my baby, Myra, was in the fifth grade. Then I went out and got a job at the Kirby-Quinn textile mill. They made drapes and special bedspreads and things like that. Then I worked in Greenville at Brookline, whose home office was Commercial Brooklines from New York. They made carpet. They made upholstery for several years and I inspected it. I did everything except weave, but they never would let me learn to weave.

After I came back to work after my son was killed in 1962, we went into carpets and I inspected that. Tufted carpet at first, and then we learned to knit carpet. The difference in tufted and knit carpet is in the way it's made. Tufted carpet is like sewing on a Singer sewing machine, only it's got needles all the way across where they put the thread down in it. It's like sewing on a sewing machine, only its hundreds of needles going across the frames at the same time. In the knit system, they weave it back and forth and you can just ravel it out. There's a lot of difference in the way they're made. I'll take the tufted. It's easier to make and easier to mend, and it doesn't ravel as bad when you put it on your floors.

I worked there for eighteen years with the same people, and you know, I enjoyed it. We've talked about it several times, about how we enjoyed ourselves. There were about 300 employees but everybody worked together, and that means a lot. We worked hard, but we enjoyed it.

Greenville County has been a textile center since before my time, or at least as far back as I can remember. Woodside Mills is the oldest in the county. It's still there, but it doesn't go under the Woodside name since they sold it. It was the biggest mill in the South under one roof for a long time. That as far back as I can remember. The textiles have really went down because most of the mills closed, like this bleacher mill here in Traveler's Rest, right above Winfrey. It has been closed for a good bit. They swapped owners as different companies bought it, but none could keep it up. The last one was Kern, but it, too, went under. They closed it down about two or three months ago.

The Beaty Mill is a part of old Woodside Mill that was bought and rebuilt out in the county below Greenville. And there is Jutson and Dunney. That's about all the mills I know in Greenville County, now.

In times gone by there was a bunch of mills, like Brown Mill. Brown was a big mill. There were mills everywhere. Traveler's Rest didn't grow very much until about year before last. It been about three years since it started growing. They wouldn't let industry put in here, none at all. Finally they got Amtech, and after Amtech came they changed councilmen. After the City Council changed, the town started to grow. They got Coleman out of there and got somebody else in and business begin to come. There's several businesses in Traveler's Rest now.

Of my children, the first to marry was Jean. And then Leonard. And then Jerry and then Frankie. Frankie, the oldest, didn't marry until he was 27. When he came home from service he said he hadn't found a girl he thought he wanted to make his lifetime partner. Now he says he wished he had waited until he was thirty. When he came back he went back to his old job at Steel-Huddle until after he was married and had two children. Then he went to Greenville Tech and finished there while working full-time in the Steel-Huddle shop. He came back one year and finished at Furman. Jean, she went to school for two years here and then went to seminary in New Orleans. Since then she's been teaching school all over, from Alabama, Louisiana, California and Alaska, and then back to South Carolina, Mississippi, and Georgia. She's not teaching this year, for a change.

And then there's Leonard. He went to work for Peter College when he was thirteen and worked there for several years. When he had been in tenth grade in high school two weeks, he said he wasn't going to school any longer. I said, No, you're not going to quit! He told me that he already did. He begged me to let him quit as he was already making \$50 a week, keeping time for a company over in Pickens. I said no, you go on back to school, your \$50 job won't last and you'll have nothing to show for it. He had to get an education! I had a time with him! But then he went on and finished school. He worked as an electrician for several years before starting his own business as an electrical contractor. He quit that and went into burglar alarms and now he owns two burglar alarm companies in Greenville.

My Jerry is an electrician, has been one for many years. My Judy's an Executive Housekeeper at Hampton Inn out at Hampton. My baby, Myra, has been married 21, or 22 years. She's forty, now. I had more trouble getting her married than with any of the rest. She came home on a Saturday before Christmas Eve and told me she wanted to have a double-wedding ceremony on the next Saturday. I was shocked! One week to make plans! [Laughter] Myra is a homemaker. She keeps house and she's going back to school, she tells me.

So, that completes all my children, all but Ronnie, who passed away in 1962 in a car wreck accident. He was nineteen years old.

Now, I'll tell you, I've got seventeen grandchildren and I'm real proud of all of them. I haven't had to go to jail to see none of them yet! [Laughter.] Yes, I'm real proud of all of them. Most of them's grown except three. Three aren't grown yet, but they soon will be. I have nine great-grandchildren and I'm proud of them, too.

My grandparents all lived in South Carolina, in the upper-western corner of the state. I don't remember your great-grandparents, but they were part of a Darnell family that came from Pickens County.

My daddy was born and reared in Laurens County in "the Dial" which is what they called the Dial Church Section. He was born there in 1885. His three brothers, John, Lawrence, and Jessie, worked textiles in Laurens County at Watt's Mill until John moved to Greenville.

My parents married in Laurens County. They lived there a year before they moved to Anderson County where they lived until I was fourteen and we moved to Greenville County. Dad lived to be 83.

My mothers's family was from Anderson County and they pretty much still live there, although my mother was born and reared in Pickens County. My Granddaddy Hight [Spelling?] on my mother's side, who had three wives, was from Pickens County. Grandmother Hight passed away when Mama was seven years old. Mama was born in Pickens County in 1888, and lived to be 71 years old. She had two brothers and two sisters, and three half-sisters and one half-brother. [Tape ended abruptly.]

LIFE ON A BOAT



Taped Interview: February 27, 1989.

Interviewer: Tommy Stockstill

Interviewee: Mrs. Jennie M. Crumbaugh
3201 28th Street
Meridian, Miss.

Location: Meridian Community College

My father, who worked in water transportation, was a civilian employee of the U.S. Corps of Engineers. When I was a young child we lived in Arkansas where he worked out of the Little Rock District. This meant that he worked on the tributaries of the Mississippi River that run through the State of Arkansas. Among those are the White River, the Black River, the Red River, the Arkansas River, and a very small, small river, the St. Francis, which really did not have a lot of water transportation on it. Part of my father's responsibility -- well, I should say, the major thrust of his responsibility at that time, was to see to it that the channels in these rivers were free of debris.

They called this debris 'jelly-wog' snags, and they used snag boats and snag barges to get them out. These boats were equipped with an A-frame on the forward deck with a block-and-tackle over it. They used this arrangement when they came up on a snag and then deck hands and the first mate, and the Captain, all worked together to pull it from the river.

The whole idea of keeping the water flowing is basic to flood control. Once a log or a tree, or whatever, gets embedded, sand will build up around it and make a dam. Water behind it can't get around and then you have too much flooded land. Some flooded land is basic to farming just as it was in ancient Egypt, you know, the Nile Delta which, to this day, I understand, is still growing wonderful cotton. You have to have some flooding, but it can't be constant.

They cleared snags, obviously, in good weather. They worked primarily from May through about October when it became cold and unpleasant to work in the water. So, in wintertime, in what they called 'lay-by' time, these boats were tied up at various ports in little river towns in Arkansas.

I had been born in Newport, a small town on the White River in Arkansas. I had no brother or sisters so I was very much the focus of my parents, you might say.

When I was very young my father, who was with flood control even back in those early, early days, worked through the dreadful flood of 1937. I remember his bringing little bunny rabbits home that had been flooded out. Anyway, he brought me these little bunnies and told me how sad it was. Oh, I cried and cried because their mama had been drowned. I was going to raise these little rabbits. If you've ever tried to do that, you know it can't be done.

I remember Dad's being away on the river a great deal. I spent my first few years of elementary school in Newport before we began to live on a boat during the winter months. It was in the late Depression years and I was ten the first winter we spent on board a boat. We stored our household goods and believe me, it was a fairly easy thing to do, as they were not great in number. We stored our furnishings, parceling them out among my mother's family, and brought only minimal things to use on the boat.

We, my mother and I, went to Parkin, Arkansas, on the St. Francis River, to be with dad over the lay-by season. I went to school in Parkin and can remember some wonderful, wonderful things about that. I don't know how much time you have allotted; I may tell you more than you ever wanted to know.

We were on, we lived on, the U.S. Snagbarge Stephen Anderson. I believe it's a craft that has long since been de-commissioned by the Corps of Engineers. My father made it convenient for us to get up and down the bank of the river by having his men build us steps before they left

for the season. These steps were simply sawdust on some posts that went down the bank so we could get up and down readily without too much trouble.

You see, we had to spar in and spar out from the bank as the level of the river changed. I always had a lot of fun helping Dad with that. He used a ratchet. There was a big spar on the ratchet and he would raise the ratchet and simply pull the boat away from the bank and then pull the ratchet so that the spar would drop into the mud at whatever level we needed to be. Of course, we had a gangplank from the deck of the boat onto whichever step was appropriate.

The boat had to be secured. We had people who came on board to keep watch if Mother and Dad both left the boat at the same time. We had a car parked up on the bank and if it was raining when it was time for me to go to school, Dad would take me down in the car. Otherwise, in clear weather, I would simply walk. The river was, by city block measurements, something in the neighborhood of four blocks from school.

I can remember that in the crew's quarters, the so-called bunk room, all of the bedding had been secured for the winter. All the cots were put back against the wall. It made an absolutely wonderful skating rink. All my friends from school would come on Saturdays and we would skate on that main deck. All around. You see, we were inside from the winter weather. That was another thing I enjoyed so much.

Because I lived on the boat, it made me somewhat of an anomaly, certainly, and it was a wonderful way to make friends in a new place. It was very interesting the numbers of boys I could attract because I lived on that boat. As a matter of fact, I vividly remember the day when an entire Boy Scout troop came to the boat. Dad had invited them and he was going to help them with knot-tying. He was an expert at that, being on water and working with nautical line all the time.

I was ten years old and I could really tie those knots. I mean I could do a Spanish Bowline in the wink of an eye. Some of the boys got a little discouraged with the fact that they couldn't do that. The evening after the Boy Scouts were there my father sat me down and talked to me about some of the requirements of the male ego, and that perhaps I needn't be so proficient in knot-tying. That's one of the things I certainly do remember.

I remember my room. It was the first mate's cabin. My mother and father occupied the Captain's cabin. I remember that I saw no irony, no dichotomy at all in having a dressing table with a pink taffeta skirt on it. That was all right, but my clothes were put away in a metal locker, the same as the first mate kept his. I had a double bunk, which made it fun to have children come and spend the night with me on the boat.

I remember my dog, my little Boston Bulldog. Oh, he loved being on that boat! One day I had him on the workbench my father had constructed in the boiler room in the forward part of the main deck, the room where they fired the boiler to move the boat. Well, primarily in this case, they used that boiler to run the capstans because, of course, when you've got a heavy log on your block and tackle, you had to have a capstan to run your line around, and steam power to pull anything heavy from the water.

Anyway, I had my dog on the workbench that day, feeding him candy. He gave a low growl I had never heard him use, and began sort of prancing up and down the on the workbench. He was looking toward the door going into the head, and I looked and saw a coiled rope that started to move. I thought the coiled rope was moving at first, but then I realized, when I saw its head, it was a snake and it was ready to strike. I was always a matter-of-fact child, and I wasn't frightened because I wasn't anywhere near it.

The day before this happened, my father and I had been fishing of the port side of the boat, and we had seen this snake with its head out of the water, swimming down the river.

My father said to me, "Jennie, that's a water moccasin. I've shown you pictures of water moccasins and I've told you how dangerous they are. They are snakes that might kill you if they bite you, and you are to avoid them at all costs."

We talked a good deal about water moccasins so when I saw this snake I knew to stay out of his way. I wasn't particularly frightened, but ten-year-olds rarely are. I gathered my dog in my arms, I wasn't used to carrying him very much because he was an independent soul, and so was I. We went up the steps to the second deck where the living quarters were and I went my father's office.

"Daddy," I said.

"Uh huh," he said, somewhat distracted by the work he was doing.

"You know that snake we saw swimming up the river?"

"Uh huh." He went right on with his work.

I said, "It's in the downstairs head."

I suspect that he turned pale all over, I mean, the color drained from his face and he said, "You stay here."

I told Mother what was going on and she said, "We'll go on the steps. Daddy might need us; go on the steps."

So we stood on the steps and watched him kill the snake. It put up a fight but he killed it with an oar. It probably was the snake we had seen the day before, but we don't know how it could have gotten on board unless it came crawled upon the bank and crossed the gangplank. Or it possibly could have come on board by a line that had been left in the water. However he came, this story has stuck with me all these years.

There was a lot of clean-up work that had to be done on the boat, everything had to be secured for the winter, as I have indicated with the example of the bunk room. We cleaned the boiler room and the line had to be appropriately stored, along with all the tools that had to be put where they belonged. There was the matter of the boat having to be bailed out when the rain was so heavy it would simply run down into the hold of the boat. Dad and I would be responsible for that. We had a good time. I would use a bail -- a scoop, in case you aren't familiar with those terms. I would scoop up the water into a bucket which Daddy pulled up from the hold to empty over the side. We did a lot of that, and for a ten-year-old, it was a fun thing to do. I thought I was really helping.

There were limited things to do be done over the winter. There were inspections done by people out of Little Rock. We secured everything, making it look really nice before inspectors came. Dad's particular official function over the winter was the security of the boat.

Just before opening the next season when spring came, Dad had to paint. He wouldn't let me paint because he knew what could happen with a paintbrush in the hands of a kid. It had to be done so precise and neat. He had some of the crew come on part-time to help.

We had our own light plant. We had all the usual lamps in our living quarters that were run entirely by our own plant. They had to have the plant during operating season and it was kept in working order. I have no gift of physics or anything remotely related to it, but as I understand it, it was a fairly simple plant and probably models like it are still in operation. I remember it looked like, perhaps twice the size of a motor in a car.

Parkin was a very small town in Arkansas, largely peopled by those who owned land, cotton land, outside of town. An hour's drive from Memphis into Arkansas, it had a limited number of stores, with an appropriate number and variety of churches. My mother and father made friends in church and among the merchants in the town. They would entertain their friends and have card parties on the boat.

I was allowed to have parties, like the skating party I mentioned, that sort of thing, so we had a pleasant association while we were there. As a matter of fact, I met my friend of longest standing in that town. We remained friends and were in each other's weddings. She and her husband, now living in Jackson, and came to my party last Christmas. I attended her 9th birthday party when we were kids, and now I am a grandmother of three and she is grandmother of five. It was an opportunity, you see, to make a friendship that would be lifelong.

We lived in that same spot a second winter and then my father took this same boat over to the Arkansas River where we wintered at Pine Bluff, a somewhat larger place. It is, I think, second to Little Rock in population. We pretty much enjoyed living at Pine Bluff. We made the same sorts of friends and relationships. We had a better place to tie up, but certainly not as romantic as the place in Parking. In Pine Bluff we were simply a part of the Esso Standard Oil dock. It being a distribution point, they had a place big enough to load and unload barges.

In a few years my father was promoted and we moved to Memphis where we lived during the years of the second World War. My father, we found out after the war was over, did a lot of things, such as transporting sea lines from Memphis to New Orleans. Mother and I never knew he was doing that. We would take him to the big Esso Standard Oil docks in Memphis and he would board a boat there. We simply accepted that this was just something he was doing for the government. He protected us all that time.

I've made trips on the Mississippi with my father, both my husband and I did, prior to his death. We enjoyed trips from Memphis to New Orleans on the larger boats, you understand, on steam and diesel boats.

It was an interesting time. We did a lot of fishing. All three of us enjoyed fishing. In the White river the fishing is just fabulous. The fish that come out of there -- the fresh water trout and the catfish! There was a time when you didn't have to breed catfish in order for them to be edible. The water was as clear to the bottom as it should be, and pollution was unheard of. In the old days we could catch fish from these rivers and Dad would clean them and Mother would fry them in a pan and believe me, that is not the same as frozen whiting from Winn-Dixie!

At the time of Dad's death he was Chief Pilot on the Steamer Mississippi, flagship for the President of the Mississippi River Commission, the commission in charge of everything from Lake Itasca [at source of the river in Minnesota] to New Orleans and beyond to the river's mouth. It was so much fun when Mother and I could go stay those winters with him. I think it made me a more gregarious person, able to make friends wherever I go.

I hope I've helped you. Maybe your story will not be like anyone else's. I know of no other ladies who were brought up on a boat.

**HARD TIMES: THE 1927 MISSISSIPPI
RIVER FLOOD
AND THE 1930'S DEPRESSION**



Taped interview: January 14, 1989.

Interviewer: Bryan Wiggins

Interviewee: Amle Wiggins

Location: 504 Teche Road
Morgan City, La.

D. O. B.: 1916

I am 72 years old. I went to school in Berwick, Louisiana when I was young. It was a small schoolhouse, not very many rooms. We lived down in the bayous on the River Road in Berwick three miles from town. We walked the three miles to school and three miles back in the afternoons.

In the summertime my daddy built boats ... he built all kinds of boats; he was a carpenter. In the winter we went back in the bayous to the trapping grounds. We used traps, steel traps that my daddy set, to catch muskrats and minks and coon and sometimes rabbits. He would skin these things and dry them and sell them to make our living.

Sometimes the big 'rats [muskrats] would bring a dollar apiece. Sometimes he could catch 25, 30, 40 'rats a day, but the smaller 'rats weren't that much, only the "top 'rats", as they called them. The 'coons were maybe five dollar apiece. The minks were maybe thirteen dollars apiece. But he didn't catch as many of those as he did muskrats.

In 1927 there came a time of high water when the lower Mississippi and lots of Louisiana were flooded. The flood covered all the River Road. Everything was covered. No one could live in their homes. Everyone had to leave. All the houses were under water and we had to go and live in camps down on an island. They called it Belleah [sp?] Island. We lived mostly on cow's milk. People brought their cows down there and when the cows were being milked we all lined up to get milk. We lived mostly on milk from those cows. That was all the food we could get down there. There was no stores or anything and we just had to do with what we had.

My Dad would catch fish. We had a lot of fish to eat. We would clean them and hang them in the sun to dry like the Eskimos dry their blubber or whatever. We'd dry the fish on canes and that was a good way to dry them. My Mother would cook that, and we'd eat that. It wasn't very tasty but it kept us alive. It kept us going. We liked the turtle eggs we found. We lived on them for many weeks.

The high water drowned most of the fur animals and made them leave. They would leave and go to some other part of the marsh that we couldn't get to, so we couldn't make no money with furs then. There wasn't no fur animals for us to catch.

In the camp we used oil lamps and kerosene. We had a wood-stove that we had to cut wood to put in to cook and eat by. It was just a little one-room camp that we lived in.

We must have lived down there in the camp about three months, I imagine, before the water subsided enough for us to go back to try to live in the house. We didn't try to go to town very often, sometimes it was two months or so. Sometimes a boat would come down with groceries to sell and we would pay for them, if we had the money. We bought a few groceries and a few fruits from the boats that came down, but it wasn't very often, maybe a once a month.

My daddy tried to cross the river with a little boat, we called a skiff, with oars so he could try to row across the water. He would go way up the river and then by the time he crossed it would take him way downstream. He couldn't just go across, he had to go, what do you call it -- diagonal? -- diagonal, before he could cross to the other side to go to a store to get food or medicine or something we needed. And he would have to do the same thing when he came back. It would take him hours to get back.

My daddy and I tried to go to town in a skiff with oars and it took us all day to row from where we were camped to go all the way to town because we had to pass through a bay and part of the river to get there and it took us hours. He would row for a while and then I would let him rest awhile and I would row and then when I'd get tired, then he'd start rowing again. We did that and it took us almost all day to get where we were going. We didn't have any motor just two oars with the skiff that he had built himself. It was built like a little boat but it was just a skiff.

The whole time during the high water we couldn't go to school at all. We went to school from the time school opened until about November. In November we had to quit school and go trap. We would be out of school for about three months. When we went back to school we had to catch up those months before we could pass to the next grade. We had to study real hard to catch all that up.

We were sick many-a-time when we lived in the camp. We had to go get the doctor -- if he would come. Sometimes we took the boat and go to town to get him when we lived in the camp. My mother made home medicine for us. I remember for our colds she would slice some onions and put a lot of sugar on it and put it out in the air -- in the air, you know, like on top of our camp, on a shelf or something outside, not in the house. She let the dew melt all that sugar and next morning she'd make us eat the syrup that was made from those onions. That was a good remedy for a cold. It would cure our cold and make us get better. We would be hoarse from the cold and it would cure our hoarseness right away. It didn't taste too good because of the onion, unless you liked the taste of onion, and I didn't.

She would give us Castor Oil -- it seemed that every month she would give us Castor Oil. She also made a lemon tea for a cold, or for any sickness. She would boil lemons with sugar to make a lemon tea. And my dad would go out and cut barks off a camphor, or a sweet bay tree. He would cut the bark off and boil it to make tea. We would drink that almost every night because it was a good tea to drink. He liked tea. He drank tea instead of coffee. He made tea with the sweet bay leaves and the bark of the tree and it always tasted good.

We stayed on the island until the water went down enough so we could go back to our home. When the water went out the silt from the water, the mud, had settled on our floors about a foot deep. We had to push it out of the house off the floor and clean it before we could even think of moving back in. Most of the floors had got all buckled up from the water soaking it so long. My daddy had made shelves way up on the walls where he had put our furniture so the water couldn't get to the furniture we had to leave there. We had to take it all that down and rearrange the house and try to live in it after the high water was gone. It took a good many months before we could settle everything and really live in the house. The high water had come up as high as the windows. Many houses just had their roofs sticking out of the water when the water was high.

Soon after the flood came the depression when it was hard to get money. I went through the sixth grade in school. When we were old enough we girls worked in people's homes -- do their work, cleaning. When they were sick or anything they would hire us to do all their work. They would pay us about \$2.50 a week to work from daylight 'till dark, which was plenty then. We could live on it because things weren't expensive then like today. It was hard to find jobs, to get paid even after you found a job; people didn't have much money to even pay us off. We had to wait, so it was hard then to buy our food.

The first thing we did in the mornings, I guess, would be to get all dressed with boots and long coats and go see if our traps had anything _ . [inaudible]. We wore hip boots and a lot of warm clothes and got in a tiny [inaudible] boat to paddle up and down the bayous where we had set out our traps. I'd grab whatever we had caught and knock it in the head and put it in our bags and go on to the next trap. My sister and I would travel for miles and miles in that . [inaudible]

[She was calling a small boat a particular name but this transcriber could not understand the word.]

We were scared, sometimes. Lots of times we had to kill snakes before we could get to our traps. A lot of times we would get to a hill that the rats had built and there would be a big snake right on top of the hill. We had to leave our trap there and run somewhere to find something to kill it with before we could get to our trap and that was scary, but we got used to it. We took it as our stride; that was the way we made our living so it didn't bother us too much.

It would take up almost all day to run our traps. Sometimes we took our lunch with us and would sit around to eat on a 'rat hill there in the marshes when we got hungry. Sometimes when we waded the marshes we'd jump from one floater to the next to keep from sinking up to our waists in the water. Floaters were little islands of land, or mud, that floated in the water when the water was high. The animals would eat up all the roots and all, and leave just a little island of land that we would step on. It would soon begin to sink so you had to hurry up and step from one to the other or you'll [inaudible]. All I can think of, we'd call them little islands of land, or mud, kinda like a bunch of grass. You could step on these bunches of grass but if you stayed on them long you'd begin to sink. You had to keep going, almost like a deer running in the marsh. They'd jump from one floater to the next, keep running. Sometimes when we fell through we'd have to pull our self up, dump the water out of our boots and go again.

We carried a forked stick that we would walk in the marsh with. When we caught an animal in our trap that was still alive we would hit it in the head with our stick and knock it out. We'd kill it if we hit it hard enough. Most of the time when we hit a 'possum it'd play dead. We would pick it up and put it in our bag on our back and carry it to our next trap, carry it almost all day on our back. Then when we got back to camp and dumped our bags of fur, the 'possum would jump up and run. It had been "playing "possum" all that time.

I guess I would say that my sister was my best friend back then. She was my best friend then and still is now, after all these years. I'm 72 and she's 75 and we're still the best of friends.