

JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

ORAL HISTORY STUDY OF:
SENIOR CITIZEN'S
RECOLLECTIONS OF THE "GOOD OLD DAYS"

O. H. 76.15

MRS. MAXINE DAVIS

Interviewed

by

Mr. Shawn Knox

on

May 4, 1976

JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY

JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW AGREEMENT

You have been asked for information to be used in connection with the Oral History Program at Jackson State University, Jackson, Mississippi. The purpose of this program is to gather and preserve information for historical and scholarly use.

A tape recording of your interview will be made by the interviewer, and a typescript of the tape will be made and submitted to you for editing. The final retyped and edited transcript, together with the tape of the interview will then be placed in the oral history collection at Jackson State University Jackson, Mississippi. Other institutions or persons may obtain a copy. These materials may be made available for purposes of research, for instructional use, for publication, or for other related purposes.

Mrs. Maxine Davis

I, _____, have read the above and, in view of the historical and scholarly value of this information, and in return for a final typed copy of the transcript, I knowingly and voluntarily permit Jackson State University, Jackson, the full use of this information. I hereby grant and assign all my rights of every kind whatever pertaining to this information, whether or not such rights are now know, recognized, or contemplated, to Jackson State University, Jackson, Mississippi.

Mrs. Maxine Davis
Interviewee (Signature)

Oct. 12th 76
Date

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF INTERVIEW

Mrs. Maxine Davis was born in Forrest, MS in 1907. She is 69 years old. She came to Jackson around 1934. She lived in Hattiesburg before coming to Jackson. She married twice both husbands last names were Davis and both are dead. She has four children and four grandchildren and one great grandchild. She was a elevator operator at Wathall hotel now the DownTowner. She now lives in Building A of the Golden Key apartments.

SUMMARY INTERVIEW

On May 4th, 1976 around 1:15 p.m. two other students and I arrived at Building A of the Golden Key Apartments Senior Citizen Site. The interview was held in a small meeting area. The interview lasted one hour and five minutes.

In talking with Mrs. Davis, she seems to be a very Christian active woman who seems to enjoy helping people. Mrs. Davis remembers coal and wood stoves. She also remembers using kerosene lamps and people growing their own food. The games she played as a child was "Little Sally Walker, and I lost My Hankerchief." She has been a member of the New Morning Star Church for over 30 years. She cooked for the people of Rabbit Shows and Silas Green shows. She also remembers a Silas Brown Show. In talking about the black/white relationships she thinks the worse times were the sixties during the Civil Rights Movements and the best are now. She says things are better for Blacks now but, we still have a long way to go.

K: Today is May 4, 1976 and ah, I'm in Building A of the Golden Key Apartments and I'm interviewing a Mrs. Maxine Davis.

Ah, Mrs. Davis, the first question I want to ask you is what year did you come to Jackson and ah, why?

D: I came to Jackson about forty . . . six years ago because at that time I was living in Hattiesburg, Mississippi and my husband was out of work and then he came here and got work at ah, the Oil Mill so, then he sent for me.

K: Well, what was the City like when you came here?

D: Well, its ah, much different now. I t was smaller. The people were more friendlier, they didn't have the air conditions and everything that they have now and they would be out on the porch and out in they yard and they were real friendly. And, it wasn't as much as stealing and robbing and it wasn't any dope as I knew of then. And ah, it was just . . . kind of safe; it was more safer then, than it is now. I liked it very much.

K: Um, hum. Okay, you say your husband came to Jackson and worked at the Oil Mill--can you remember the name of the Oil Mill?

D: Buckeye. . .

K: Buckeye Oil Mill?

D: I think it was there on ah, Monument and Gallatin. I think it was called Buckeye Oil Mill.

- K: Alright. Okay, ah, what kind of reputation did the City have when you came-- you know, what were people saying about the City? I guess, you can say it was a good place to work because your husband found a pretty good job.
- D: Right, Right.
- K: Well, can you tell me--you know, what else were they saying about the City?
- D: Well, then usually it was pretty good. Of course, the people would drink and get out and do things that they wanted to do but, it seemed that ah, the people wasn't making very much money at that time but, everything was cheap. They could live off of less; and if they'd make ten or twelve dollars a week they could live off of that. And ^{ah,} /one person wasn't trying to take the other person's life to take what he have. . .seemingly that everyone was anxious to work in those days and. . .now the're not.
- K: Alright, Mrs. Davis, can you tell me ah, anything about your early school days?
- D: Not in Jackson, I didn't go to school after I got to Jackson no more than an adult school and to the Baptist Seminary and you take ah, courses in ah, Christian leadership. But, I didn't go to public school after I got here because I married young and I was out of school having children.
- K: Well, how old were you when you married?
- D: Sixteen.
- K: And, you say the Baptist Seminary. . .were you sixteen when you were going there?
- D: No, no. I was ah, in my. . .late twenties when I went to Baptist Seminary.
- K: Ah, like when you first came to Jackson. . .ah, you know like, what did you and your husband do to have a good time? Maybe like, on the weekends. . . .
- D: Go to a movie. Go to a movie.

K: Went to the movie?

D: Every Saturday night, we looked forward going to the movie.

K: Well, what movie did you'all go to?

D: Ah, it was ah, Amite and Alamo and ah, sometimes we'd go you have to go upstairs and white people would be downstairs and you'd go up in the balcony.

K: Um, hum. The Central?

D: I think it was Central. It was on Capitol Street up near ah, State Street. It use to be a movie up there.

K: Okay, ah, Mrs. Davis. . . Now, I want to ask you. . . you told me what you did as a teenager to ah, have a good time, now what ~~did~~ you do as a mature adult, through your middle ages, up to now, to have a good time?

D: Well, in my ah, ah, . . . what I called matured adult I started to playing cards and doing things like that. And ah, for a few years I changed. I didn't think that was right and I promised the Lord that I wouldn't play cards anymore.

I worked in the Church which I enjoyed very much and I'm having more fun and enjoyment now then I have ever had before. I have served as ah, the president of our Mission. At present now, I serve as Sunday School teacher and ah, president of ah, a club here in the building and a teacher of our Mission Circle. And, I'm enjoying it and I have a desire to do something to help other people.

I do volunteer work. I've been on the volunteer program for about three years and I try to do something everyday to help someone and at night I search to try to see if I have did anything to help someone.

cont.,

- D: Ah, my health isn't very good but, if I just can do something--if it's nothing but give someone a call and then sometimes . . . I have cards and when I know someone is shut in, I'll mail them a card or something to try to bring sunshine into someone else's life and I am very happy I thank the Lord in my older days/I am happy. I am really happy now!
- K: Alright. (Clear Throat) Now, this volunteer program--is it connected with the Church?
- D: No, the volunteer program of this ah, City. The Allied . . .see, I'm working here helping serve these nutrition lunches everyday.
- K: Oh, at the Site?
- D: Right.
- K: At the Senior Citizen's Site.
- D: Right.
- K: Is this a volunteer program for the Senior Citizen's?
- D: Yes, volunteer program for the Senior Citizen's.
- K: Okay, now what Church are you a member of?
- D: New Morning Star.
- K: How long have you been a member there now?
- D: I've been a member there about ah, twenty. . .excuse me, about thirty-six years.
- K: Where is it located?
- D: Next door here.
- K: What's the name of it ?
- D: New Morning Star, they call it now.
- K: The New Morning Star?

D: Right. Um, hum. Dr. M. K. Nelson's my pastor; and I work in the Mission Department and the Sunday School Class.

K: Okay

D: And I pay out of . . . I'm not able to work but, out of my ah, income through the government I pay tithes in my church besides I do give a offering.

K: Well, ah, what do you'all do to have good times in the Church?

D: Oh, have meetings. Well, Sunday School I enjoyed, the morning worship then ah, at our circle meeting we enjoyed that together; mission circle. And, then ah, about once a month we'd have refreshments after our circle meeting which meets twice a month--every other Wednesday. And, on Sundays they have lunches to sell and like this past Sunday they chartered a bus so we went out by Crystal Springs. Our pastor preached out there Sunday evening and only that's just enjoyment to me. (Laughter) I just enjoy it. And, the fellowship of being with the people I enjoyed that so much; just the fellowship of being with people. I love people.

K: Well ah, what about. . . have you ever heard of tent meetings and camp meetings you know, along time ago?

D: Yes, I've heard of those. Ah, as I can remember I never have been to one I don't think so.

K: Well, this New Morning Star Church--you say you've been a member thirty-six years? Has it been in that same location?

D: No, it was down on Street, a small church. We've been out here it will be two years September coming.

K: It was just two years?

K: Is the one on Street . . . is it still standing the building, the foundation?

D: Yeah, it's still standing. They sold it to another denomination . . . I think ah, the Apostles of Christ or something. But, anyway they sold it but that building is still there.

K: Okay, ah, do you recall any you know, events that might have had a great impact on your life. Anything, you know, that might have happen to you in your lifetime that you felt was something, you know, that was . . . you know, might have had a great impact on you?

D: Oh. My mother didn't raise me, and ah, she let her sister raise me and she went to Indianapolis, Indiana oh, in sometimes in the teen . . . I don't remember what year.

And ah, . . . she came back to see us a couple of times. In 1945, I was able to go up there. And I went to this address that she had given me and she wasn't there; and the people told me she was at work, but, I didn't tell them that she was my mother because I didn't know if she had told the people she had a daughter. But, I waited for her and when she came in she didn't know me. At first, it hurt me very bad because I thought that she knew me and maybe had told the people that she didn't have any childrens. So, she just spoke and started upstairs. And, ah, so they told here; they say, "A lady's here from Mississippi want to speak to you", and she came back and shook hands with me and told me her name and I told her mine. And, she turned again and started up stairs and she made about two or three steps and then I guess something touched her and she come back and said, "Lord, this is my child." She hadn't seen me in so long till she didn't know me.

K: Ugh.

D: And that was one of the touchiest things I think I've ever had.

K: Ugh.

D: S-h-e was so frail and been over there thinking at that time that she couldn't live down South anymore.

K: Well, what state was she in

D: Indiana. Indianapolis, Indiana. And, had worked so hard and she just couldn't stand down here anymore so she told me the next morning I could go to work with her, and I did. And, when we got to the lady's house, the lady told her if she had company she couldn't use her that day. And then, by her I guess needing to work so bad, she carried me back part the way back to where she was rooming and I found the way back and she went on to work and that was so special to me, because the people here wasn't that bad. Now, I believe if she had been here and I had carried her to work with me that they probably would accepted. She'd said that this was my daughter . . . or I would have told them this is my mother and she's just going to be here with me while I work, but, they wouldn't let her work. But, yet then ah, in the fifties she got sick up there and she told me she was going to have surgery there. So, I had the childrens and my first husband said, "Now, I'd begged her to come home." And, she felt bad about it because she didn't raise me. And, I remember she asked me the third time she said, "Baby, do you really want me to come home--I told her yes. I said come on and stay with me because I was working then; I was running an elevator at Wathall Hotel which it was called then--its ah, the DownTowner now, from eleven at night to seven in the morning trying to keep my childrens in school. So, in August she came home and stayed with me until she died in December.

DAVIS

K: December? What year did she die?

D: 1950.

K: 1950?

D: So that was very touching to me. And ah, I always said no matter how things meaning if it was hard I would keep all my childrens together because mother's love means alot.

K' Yes mam.

D: Her sister raised me and I can remember so often that she would tell me that I was always afraid of dark. And ah, if I had to go out for anything I'd be afraid to turn around . . . I'd backtrack in the door (Laughter) and she said, "Don't anyone want you but me, and if I had any sense I couldn't want you."

K: Your sister?

D: Her sister.

K: Your mother's sister?

D: I didn't have any sister or brothers; I was reared up as the only child. So, than I said, "Lord if I have fifty I'd keep them together and just/^{if}with whatever we have we'd have love. And ah, I wished all all mothers could feel like that because a mother's love means a lot to childrens.

K: Yes mam.

D: Um, hum. I know that from experience.

K: Alright ah, your mother's sister raised you?

D: Right.

K: Your mother, she was from Mississippi too?

D: Yes.

K: Alright. Okay, we're going to get on to something else: Do you remember anything about the Flood of ah, 1927?

D: I . . .I heard about it but I--I don't ah, know too much about that.

K: Um, hum.

D: That was the flood that was in the Delta wasn't it?

K: Yes mam.

D: Um, hum, I heard a lot about but for knowing much about it I don't.

K: Alright. What about . . .you remember the opening Of Hawkins Field, the airport out there. I think they opened up in 1927. Do you remember anything about that?

D: No other than reading about it.

K: Okay, you were telling me something about you were working in the DownTowner-- I going to ask you now, you know like, . . .I want you to just try to think and give me a list of some of the jobs that you had . . . [Loud Interruption of noise] to earn a living starting with that one. You know, explain what you did?

D: I was an elevator operator down there and my shift was ah, from eleven at night to seven. I worked there five years and five months.

K: Can you remember what year that was?

D: Forty-eight.

K: Um. Around forty-eight.

D: I started in '48, the day after Thanksgiving Day (Laughter) in November. I remember that. . . '54 . . '52 . . '53 . . .and I worked to about in the '54s.

K: You say, its the DownTowner now--but, what was it at first?

D: Wathall.

K: Walthall?

D: On Capitol Street up near the post office.

K: Can you think of any other little jobs you had?

D: Yes. I had to have jobs to live. (Laughing) I worked at ah, a brooming house up on East Hamilton five years for a lady a Mrs.

I can't remember exactly but I know I left there in ah, '61. I had a very sick uncle in Hazelhurst and I went down there to be with him. And ah, I worked at the Robinson's School Cafeteria two sessions.

K: Smith-Robinson?

D: Right.

K: Can you remember the year?

D: It's probably . . . about sixty-two and sixty-three I imagine.

K: Um, hum cause I use to go to school at Robinson.

D: You did? (Laughter) Well, I worked there when Mrs. Hubbard was the manager.

K: Okay, I want you to try

D: Other than that what I loved to do and try to get to do was being with sick people. Now, I'd sit with ah, . . . stayed with ah, one sick lady thirteen months. She'll be dead two years in July. She have two daughters but, they're not very close and ah, she wolld often tell me she knew she was going to die and she hated to leave this daughter she was living with . . . because she wouldn't have anyone to look after her. So, one day I said to her, "Well, Mrs. Manning if you leave and ah, if anything happen to M Garret before it does me, I say I'll look after her. " She told me thanks. So, now I'm helping with her.

K: You're still helping with her now?

D: Um, hum. The old lady died and the daughter had surgery the first of April and ah, she has cancer. So I'd go out there and stay and kind of do something to her alone.

K: Okay, now ah, you know, like for instance we're going to talk about some of your regular jobs, like the one you had at the Wal . . .

D: Walthall.

K: Walthall

D: Um, hum.

K: Alright, did you ever do anything to have a good time down there--you know, like . . . maybe like . . . for instance when you get on your brake or something . . . did you have time to kid around or anything?

D: No. (Laughter) that that time my eyes were better and I could crochet and thats what I would do

From the eleven to seven shift, you see, maybe about two oclock come we'd have about two hours, it wouldn't be anything to do well I'd crochet or if I had any buttons to sew on any clothes and anything like that --thats what I'd do. Thats all to do. see that was night work!

K: Yeah, plus . . . eleven at night to something?

D: Right.

K: And plus, you were on the elevator by your self, right?

D: Right.

K: Oh, okay. You didn't get no breaks between time?

D: Well, if I wanted to go ah, . . . I'd be out there and sit around, that would be all I could have to do because no one was sitting in the lobby at that ime of it.

K: (Laughing)

D: It would be the ah, desk clerk and the

K: Everybody would be sleep, huh?

D: Right. So, it was nothing to do until about four o'clock or five.

K: Um, hum.

D: Um, hum.

K: Okay, I'm going to ask you some old sayings--I want you to ah, you know, if you can tell me can you describe and give me an idea of what they are? For instance, like a "Washer woman"?

D: A what?

K: You know, a "washer woman". . .you've heard that old saying?

D: Like a washer woman that do laundry washing and ironing.

K: Yeah.

D: I've been all that.

K: What they'd take them in?

D: Um, hum. Yes, go get them and have to carry them home--wash, them, starch them, iron them, and carry them back for little or nothing, sure naming I've heard all of that.

K: Well, what about ah, "Quilting bees?" Have you ever heard of that?

D: I've heard of that, um, hum. I remember my aunt that raised me--they would have such as that quilting bees, woodcuttings out in the country thats when they were out in the rural and they'd ah, cook tea cakes (laughter) molasses bread, and stuff like that and several men would come and cut wood and the ladies would be quilting. They'd quilt maybe two, or three quilts ah, I think they would have it . . . I don't know . . .usually a night or something but, they'd quilt maybe two or three quilts out. But, I never did like it.

K: Is that why they called it "Quilting bees?"

D: I guess so.

K: Everybody get together and start sewing?

D: Um, hum. Yeah. Right. Um, hum. (Laughter)

K: (Laughing) Well, what about ah, . . . let me see sugar cane milling?
What is that?

D: Yes, um, hum. They grew cane. They called it ribbon cane or something and they gather that and my uncle had a mill and ah, had some mules would carry hitch them up some way they'd carry it around and grind that juice out the cane and put it in something and cook it to molasses and some of them would stand there and skim the foam off it and ah, cook it down to molasses.

K: Did you ever see it done?

D: Sure.

K: Did you ever help with that?

D: I dranked the juice

K: (Laughter)

D: No, I didn't get that. I was at home drinking juice. But, in those days they had good sryup.

K: Um.

D: Um, very good.

K: Fresh.

D: Sometimes . . .yes. Even they would cook ah, they had another kind of cane they called cane. And, they would make good sryup out of it; it was good strong but I liked it.

K:

D: Um, hum. S molasses and S cane. It grew up . . .
look kind of like ah, cornstalks.

K: And they milled it just like they did the rest of them?

D: Right, um, hum, yes. Sure, I've heard all of that.

K: Alright, what about (Clear throat) "Street Peddlers" and stuff that use
to go around and singing and stuff. You remember that?

D: Selling? Singing?

K: Yes, singing, selling sweet potatoes and

D: Oh, yes. Um, hum, yes. They'd have the sweet potatoes and rabbits, chickens,
collard greens, and everything. Yes, I remember that.

K: Ooh. Were most of them downtown or what?

D: Yes . . . and well, they were downtown because thats where I was living then.
They'd be down there and hollering sweet potatoes, sugar cane, peanuts .

K: Um. And, they use to sing while they be selling them.

D: Um. I don't know what they be doing . . .I guess they called it singing.
(Laughter)

K: (Laughing) Some kind of chanting they'd be doing

D: Something, um, hum.

K: To make you come out the door and listen.

D: To see, thats right.

K: Yeah. Alright, okay.

D: All kinds of good vegatables, peas beans right, I remember all that.

K: What about coal?

D: Yes, um, hum.

K: What did they have it?

D: A coal wagon would come along late in the evening sometimes, ooh, we couldn't
hardly wait until we get there and get twenty-five cents bucket of coal to
put on the fire.

cont.,

D: A wood wagon.

K: Wagons, were they trucks or did they have mules on them.

D: With the mules.

K: Um, hum.

D: Um, hum. Now, my first husband now, he worked at Coal
Yard after he got out from the Oil Mill. And he would carry . . .
he had the mules and the wagons to carry coal to deliver it. G
Coal Yard was down on Gallatin near the Southland Oil Mill before you
get to Capitol. And, he worked there for years.

K: Alright. . . .

D: Some other people would just buy coal and go round and sell it by the bucket,
because I think when you get from the coal yard you had to buy maybe . . .
a sack or something.

K: Okay, ah, when the people were buying coal, what did they use the coal for?

D: Ah, they had the fire place and they had a like in there
and they would pour the coal over in there and see that's what we used for
heat.

K: Um, hum.

D: Um, hum.

K: You used coal?

D: Right. And, when you didn't wood but when you did have coal--you just use
the wood and when you didn't have the wood you could use coal. And, we
cook with it too.

K: Cooked with it?

D: Right.

K: Stoves?

D: Um, humm. They had wood stoves and you could put coal in there--put the wood and a little coal in there and thats what we'd cook with.

You should have been around those days? (Laughter)

K: (Laughter) Did it taste good?

D: Very good. And, I tell you something else, it wasn't as many sick people as there are now.

K: Um, hum.

D: We ah, would buy the vegetables and ah, the people use to have to cook . . . they thought; that their peas and greens two hours and a half. They'd cook it well done. And, they'd have this ah, . . . they'd make meal out of corn. I've had helped shell corn alot of times and they carry it to the mill and they grinded it and make meal, and that would be some very good tasting cornbread when they cooked it.

And, all that ah, wholesome food and chickens that were raised on the yard, . . . my aunt would get them and put them up in a pen where they wouldn't get on the ground and kill those fresh chickens, kill their own hogs.

K: Well, did they do this in Jackson too?

D: I raised one hog in Jackson but, he died. I didn't get to kill him. I don't know that year so many hogs were getting sick and dying. Now, I just raised one hog. But, the people use to would raise hogs around here before they stopped them, you know.

K: Yeah.

D: Um, hum, Jackson.

K: Okay, ah, you've just about given me a description half way of what your family like. The next question I want to ask you is what was family like? Alright, for instance, we going to do it this was--alright, like when you and your husband first got married when you first had a child, you know, how was the family like?

D: it was kinda hard.

K:

D: Yes, it was very hard ah, things was . . . wasn't too much work and ah, so I jested it was hard to try and keep the childrens in school and keep them in clothes and things . . . and food that they should have.

K: Is that why you had to help him when he stopped working.

D: Sure, I had to start work. . . um, hum . . . very hard. And, we most of all had to have hand-me-downs. . . from me on down.

K: Um, hum. Okay, we're going to talk about a little music. Now do you remember anything about hamboning? Have you ever heard that phrase hamboning?

D: UM, Hum. I've heard it.

K: Have you ever seen anybody doing it?

D: I have . . . but, I tell you now., where it comes to dancing and music I never were allowed as I was a child to go to those places and after I got grown, I never did try to go to them. So, I don't know much about the hamboning and all the different dances . . . sometimes, I look at them now on TV but, they don't interest me up until now.

K: Well, you weren't allowed to go in

D: No.

- K: I'm asking . . . one about a nightclub called the Crystal Palace? I know, you probably haven't went in, but, have you ever . . . did you ever see it.
- D: Sure. I lived at that time there on Oakley Street.
- K: Um.
- D: And ah, I would go there to the corner of Oakley and Farrish, me and some more ladies and just stand there at night and listen at the music. (Laughter)
- K: Um. hum. Well, what was the Crystal Palace like then? Was it ah,
- D: where people be going seemed like it was a very nice place. I tell you something you'd never did hear of anybody or killed right there.
- K: Was it a nightclub or just you know, a blue jean type.
- D: I think it was. No, I think it was kind of exclusive.
- K: Um.
- D: Um, hum. But, I never have been it it. I never did get to go.
- K: You never did go?
- D: No.
- K: Alright, ah, (Clear throat) what about church music. I know, you know alot about church music don't you? Can you name one of the o-l-d-e-s-t church songs that you can remember . . . maybe when you were a little girl, one of them that may go way back.
- D: 'Father, I Stretch My Hands To Thee, No Other Help I Know, Amazing Grace'. . . .
- K: And they're still going strong too aren't they?
- D: Right, they are. . . Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone
- K: Um.
- D: Thats right.

K: Okay, ah, do you recall . . . let me see, you say you stay on Oakley Street right?

D: um, hum.

K: Alright, like around North Farrish Street do you recall ah, maybe a long time ago you know, when a couple of people get together and one be on a banjo and the other one on a guitar and the other one blowing a bottle and just having a little jam session . . . you remember anything like that didn't never took place on Farrish Street a long time ago?

D: Um, no.

K: Can't remember that?

K: No, I don't.

K: Okay, ah (pause) lets see . . . like Oakley Street that was almost downtown wasn't it now?

D: Right.

K: Okay, ah, can you tell me around what year was that wehn you were staying on Oakley Street? It don't have to be the exact year just approximately, you know like withing five or six years?

D: (Pause) Um, I have ah, about thirty . . . I think my baby is thirty-six cause she was born on Oakley Street and I have one son thirty-seven. She must be thirty-seven and she was born on Oakley Street and then I had a son was born on Oakley Street he's two years older. . . he's thirty-nine, McKinley Davis.

K: Um. So it was about forty

SIDE TWO OF TAPE ONE

K: In the "good Ole" days, you know like what was it like; was the traffic heavy, was it busy?

D: No, it wasn't alot of traffic, they had ah, these ah, street cars they called them that run by . . . I guess you would say electricity cause I remember so often the driver would have to get off it would come off the wire . . . the part up there and he would have to get off and re-put it on there. And ah, I don't remember the busses were running then. For as I can remember, I don't think so.

K: um. hum.

D: And ah, a few cars but not alot of them and it was very nice downtown. I would go Monday's and . . . it was very nice. Capitol Street was more livily then then it is now. (Laughter) It was alot of stores was there, and ah, so thats all I can think of downtown. They HAd on Farrish the first block it was very busy. They ah, . . . in those years the Booker T. Theatre

K: Booker T. Theatre?

D: Um, hum.

K: On Farrish and all that.

D: Um, hum.

K: Was that a black theatre?

D: Right, right, um, hum. Booker T. was black and the was black and ah, Alamo and

K: They had those many . . . how many about three black movies, huh?

D: And, yes and then they opened up another and I can't think of the name but, they opened ut up way up here on Farrish Street years ago. It use to be up there between . . .

K: They had a theatre This is on Griffin Street isn't? They had a theatre there?

D: They had one on Farrish up there between Oakley and ah, Church Street in a old

K: Um, hum.

D: H had an old building and a just so much junk in there and so then, when they moved out they ah, somebody rented that and had a theatre there for awhile and they would have midnight shows. Thats something else I would get to go to sometime . . . midnight shows.

K: Alright ah, . . .

D: They'd have it I mean on Sunday's nights at midnight. And got one minute after twelve. But, they use to didn't have ah, the movies opened on Sunday's in the daytime.

K: They didn't?

D: Um, ugh.

K: Just midnight? So it would really be Monday morning

D: Right.

K: Alright, ah, what about black businesses around Farrish Street? Do you remember any black businesses around Farrish ?

D: Well, they were very few. The Crystal Palace and Shepherd had ah, ah, the cafe and something there, and ah, very few . . . I can't think down in the first block on Farrish Street back in those days I just really can't think.

K: Well, what about Collins Funeral Home?

D: Well, Collins Funeral Home, it have been in existence for years. So, it moved here from Hattiesburg. Ah, but it was over on the other side of the street when they first moved here. . . . along there by where Percy Green's place is.

K: Yeah, it was on the other side?

D: Yes, um, huh.

K: Well, ah, can you think around what year that was? It was around probably where the Dotty Cab Stand is somewhere?

D: Um, naw. You know where Percy Green's place is?

K: That's the old Crystal Palace isn't it?

D: No, the old Crystal Palace is up there on Oakley and Farrish . . . upstairs there.

K: Um, hum.

D: Um, hum.

K: Yeah, I know where Percy Green

D: That's where the old Crystal Palace. Now ah, Collins was down between ah, Hamilton and ah, Oakley on Farrish but, it was on the other side of the street upstairs . . . ^{then} and/I guess downstairs too . . . set long years ago, that's where it was.

It started out as ah, Hall & Collins.

K: Hall & Collins? In other words, he had a partner?

D: Right.

K: Okay, do you remember anything about ah, Sim's Bakery? Have you ever heard of that?

D: Sim's?

K: Um, Sim's Bakery may be when you were young?

K: Well, what about ah, . . . what about the Southern Bank . . . well, that was kind of early in those days.

K: Let me see . . . alright for instance, like you remember Farrish Street right? About how much has it changed to you since

D: Oooh, it has changed alot because ah, from ah, Capitol to Amite Capitol to Griffin Street it wasn't any black business there in the old days. So, now they have the pool room and its a lot of those stores I think between Capitol and Amite is black and then between Amite and Griffin, I think they have some black stores and barber shops and things. It has changed alot. In fact, I'd say now black people have . . . at least I know, have more opportunities than they'd ever had here in Jackson.

K: Especially in business.

D: In business sure.

K: Okay, we're going to talk a little bit about the utilities for a few minutes.

D: Okay.

K: Alright, ah, can you tell me about your first experience with the telephone? Do you remember the first time you'd seen a telephone?

D: They use to have ah, these phones they were on the wall and you'd pick it up and ah, I think you'd say, "Hello, Central or something like that."

K: Um, hum.

D: And ah, I guess the Operator would ask your number and you'd have to tell them and they'd get it for you.

K: Um, hum.

D: Well, in those days, I didn't have a phone.

K: Alright . . .

D: I'd use them and I know that's the way they would kind of work.

- K: In other words, you had to get the Operator before you could call?
- D: Right, um, hum. That's right.
- K: Alright, Mrs. Davis can you tell me now what was your family's source of water as early back as you can remember?
- D: Ah, the earliest I can remember we had a well. We'd have to draw it out of the well. They had ah, rope something like a wheel, they had a bucket they'd let that down to the water and you pull it up. And then too, they had a spring. It was from the ground. And oh, beautiful just so clear and pretty and you could get your water out of there.
- K: Do you recall (Clear throat) the introduction of a public water system, you know, for instance, like when you were in Jackson you know--do you remember when they first had the water system started?
- D: Yes, I think so but, ah, I don't remember what year it was. Then we had ah, hydrants but, not in the kitchen and like that. They'd have the hydrant at the back door with an outlet in the yard and ah, the ah, restrooms were outside at the begining. And before then, when they didn't have the water restrooms they would have ah, a deep hole in the ground and thats what ah, they'd use like that and keep some kind of . . . my people we would keep some kind of disinfectant just to pour in there.
- K: Okay, can you remember when your family first got electricity?
- D: Um, ugh. Probably . . .
- K: We'd just going to say when you were in Jackson, you know.
- D: Um, hum. I was just trying to think because see we had the lamps . . . I know you don't know anything about that but, it was probably in the 30s

late 30s before we were able to get electricity.

K: Well, tell me about the lamps then. What were the lamps.

D: They had kerosene lamps.

K: Um.

D: Ah, you'd see them maybe around in places now. And they had their glass globe, you had to keep that ah, washed and shined and it had a wick, you had ah, keep that trimmed and everything. It gives good light thats all I had to study by.

K: Well, alright, getting back to the electricity ah, can you remember when you first saw maybe when one of your neighbors might have had it first?

D: Um, hum. when some of the neighbors had it that first it was beautiful, something/I just couldn't understand. (Laughter) really.

K: (Laughter) Alright, when you'all got it was it expensive? Did you have to pay?

D: No, it wasn't expensive. I don't think you had to pay a ah, ah, deposit to get it then I really don't think so best I can remember. And, it wasn't expensive.

K: Ah, the people that first had it . . . I know this is going to be hard but, can you remember their names? (The neighbors that first had it.)

D: Ah, Mrs. Cunningham. She lives in Chicago now. She was a friend of mine and she got it, so I just enjoyed hers until I was able to get it. I just kinda got use to it you know, by being with her alot.

K: Um, hum.

D: Um, hum. She was one of the first ones I remember to have it.

K: Well, Mrs. Cunningham, was she a neighbor of yours?

D: Yes, she was.

K: Was she fairly wealthy or just . . .

D: Yes, she was on the wealthy side.

K: Alright ah, . . .

D: She didn't have any childrens because I had childrens and my first husband was dead and so I just wasn't able. I couldn't afford it; so I thought.

K: When you first got it though it wasn't too expensive?

D: wasn't.

K: Okay. Okay ah, (Clear throat) we're going to talk about health for a little bit now. Like ah, for instance, when you first came to Jackson, were there many black doctors in Jackson?

D: Not as I know of.

K: Well, do you remember any black doctors from way back?

D: No, I don't.

K: Any kind of black doctors, dentists, anything.

D: No, I don't. Ah, . . . course that's not in Jackson.

K: Well, tell me about him?

D: A Doctor Love in ah, Hattiesburg.

K:

D: Um, hum. I remember one black doctor there, Dr. Love that use to live in Hattiesburg before I left there. Of course, when I came to Jackson I don't remember any black doctors.

K: We can talk about Doctor Love for a few minites. Ah, Dr. Love did he have any black patients, or were they going to the white doctor?

D: Preferred to go to the white.

K: You have any reason why?

D: Well, the black people at one time I think thought what the white people would do was better than what they black people could do. They just thought that they did anything it would be right.

K: Um.

D: They had that ah, thinking one time, I know. So, they just didn't have any confidence in the black professional people.

K: (Clear throat) Well, what about . . . black nurses?

D: No, I didn't know of any black nurses.

K: Well, what about ah, midwives?

D: Yes. Um, hum. They had midwives.

K: But, do you remember anything about the midwives?

D: Yes, I've use them. (Laughter) Use midwives ah, with three childrens.

K: What . . . what is - you know, can you explain to me what is^a/midwife?

D: (Cough) Well, she's just ah, does the delivery just like a doctor in the home.

K: She can deliver them?

D: Yes, she delivers the baby.

K: Um, hum.

D: And takes care. She comes every day for ten days I think and see about you and the baby and everything. Dress and bathe the baby and dress him.

K: You say you had a midwife for three of your children?

D: Yes, now my oldest one I had a doctor - white doctor but, ah, the other three I had midwives at home. the doctor was at home too; I never did go to the hospital. Most babies then were delivered at home unless you know, it be some of the rich people or something. Most of the white people go to the hospital. (Clearing throat)

K: Well, was this midwife was she in the neighborhood?

D: Yes.

K: Can you remember her name?

D: One . . . Mrs. . . . and the other one was named Mrs. Julia Funches.

K: Mrs. Julia Funches?

D: And ah, I can't think of the other ones name . . . I had three but, I can't think of this other ones name.

K: Mrs. Funches, and what was the other one name?

D: All I can think of now is Mrs. Annie.

K: Mrs. Annie?

D: I'm trying to . . . Mrs. Annie Jones, I think she was. I really think she was names Mrs. Annie Jones.

K: Um, hum. Ah, you recall the opening of the Sally Harris Clinic. It was opened in about 1940. It was on Pearl Street in the St. Mark Episcopal Church. It was a clinic and a church.

D: Um, no I don't remember the opening of it. I . . . seems that I've went out there some time after that and ah, seem like they were giving something for childrens and I carried the childrens out there.

K: Um, ha.

D: Um, hum. I don't remember what it was but, I know it was a clinic that Dr. K was over it.

K: Dr. K

D: Wasn't he over something out there?

K: Thats what we are trying to find out. I really don't know.

D: I think so.

K: Dr. K thats very important there.

D: UM, hum.

K: Okay, ah, can you remember any other doctors besides Dr. K

D: That was over out there?

K: Yes, that just was out there period.

D: Well, he was the ah, pastor of something from the church out there and

ah, they had a for best doctors

would kinda help the less fortunate like for Christmas or

that you wanted to . . . you know, if your childrens needed something you

couldn't get like shoes, they were you know, used things but, I had been

out there with my childrens for things like that. But, I didn't know of

anyone else that was helping but, I remember him.

K: Alright, well back . . . you know, back in the good ole days can you think

of any health hazards, you know, like some of the diseases or something

that people might have

D: No ah, in the "good ole days" I didn't remember anything because ah, the

people didn't have the doctors to go to and they would use home remedies,

castro oil (laughter) and ah, some kind of weed. My people use to get ah,

they said I had a temperature they gavee me in that when I was growing up.

Well,^{with}my childrens I used castro oil and I learned to use alchol and

asprins. I would break ah, . . . I don't know if they had the baby asprins

children asprins but, I would break an asprin in half and give it to them,

because I did have one child had pneumonia and then I had to get a doctor

but, other than that I don't remember having to get the doctor for my

childrens.

K: Well, can you think of anything that people might have caught besides

pneumonia, you know pneumonia, what's some of the other ones?

Cont.,

K: Other diseases or something, you know, you might have seen when you were young?

D: Well, that's about the biggest of things that people use to have such as cancer and heart trouble you didn't hear. Now, sometimes they'd have what they call . . . it was I guess heart trouble or kidney trouble they called it dropsy. The people would swell up

K: Dropsy?

D: Um, hum. Sometimes the ir legs would burst like that.

K: Legs would burst?

D: Yes, they would swell so to they would burst.

K: What would it be like a blister or something.

D:

K:

D: They say it was dropsy but, I . . . now, I say it must have been heart trouble or kidney trouble.

K: You haven't seen it recently?

D: No, no um, ugh.

K: Okay. Alright, do you remember anything about the Rabbit Foot Shows or the Silas Green Shows?

D: Um, hum, oh. I use to go to them.

K: You did?

D: (Laughter) Sure.

K: What were they like?

D: They were very entertaining and ah, it had a lot of people and ah, the clowns and the people to dance and sing and tell jokes; it was very entertaining.

Cont.,

D: go to them and carry the childrens alot. That was one of our places that we looked forward to and ah, I would ah, fix meals for them. Neck bones was cheap and vegetables and I would cook and they use to hardly get home-cooked meals and so they'd make it there.

K: The people in the shows, you cooked for them?

D: Yes.

K: Oh.

D: They'd make it there and looking for me from year to year to cook.

K: (Laughing) Okay, ah, like these Rabbit Foot Shows, like how often did they usually come through?

D: Ah, twice a year.

K: About twice a year?

D: Um, hum. Spring and Fall, I think.

K: And you say you use to cook for them?

D: Yes.

K: By you cooking for them, you didn't have to pay. But, if you didn't cook you would probably have to pay?

D: Probably so, um, hum.

K: Well, wonder what would be about the average price just to get in one of the shows?

D: About fifty or seventy-five cents.

K: Well, where was it: was it on the outside or

D: It was a tent.

K: A tent?

- D: A tent, um, hum. It would be down there on what they called on the Green. That was on Hamilton and Mill, they called that the Green. It wasn't anything along there, and they'd put that tent up there.
- K: Is that why they call it Silas Green?
- D: No, no that's just the name of the show but, that ah, that place where they would have the show they called that down on the Green, you know, Rabbit Foot, Silas Green and ah, seem like it was another one. Silas Brown, I believe.
- K: Okay, ah, let me see . . . ah, did you like to play any kind of athletic type games when you were a kid like baseball or something?
What about your husband? You didn't participate in any kind of sport?
- D: Ah, my last husband he use to play baseball.
- K: He did? You remember
- D: But, I mean that was before I knew him.
- K: Oh?
- D: Um, hum.
- K: He didn't never tell you what team he played with did he?
- D: No, it was down at ^{from} out/by M And he had a team or he was over it or something but, I don't know the name of it.
- K: When you were a little girl now, I know you weren't in Jackson when you were a little girl?
- D: Um, ugh.
- K: But, like can you just anyway, can you think of some of the games that y'all use to play? Just anything, when you were a little girl just some of the little games

Cont.,

D: childrens to the fair.

K: Um.

D: And ah, they would ride the little trains with the white childrens ah, when they were small but, later something come up but, I don't know
I mean then it wasn't anything.

K: That was in the 40s?

D: Yes.

K: Um, hah. Alright, since we're talking about you know, the blacks and whites

D: Um, hum.

K: Okay, now tell me what was it like you know, maybe for instance after the forties?

D: what?

K: What was the black white relationship like after the forties?

D: Oh, it ah, it began ah, something get into it and it began to kinda a difference in ah . . . they didn't look like ah, want to be together.

K:Q Um, hum. Well, was it like that . . . did it seem like to you when you first got here?

D: No. It didn't seem like that.

K: Seemed like it started around after the forties?

D: After the forties and early fifties, I don't know what started it.

K: (Clear throat) Okay, you recall any event that might have happen to you during the Jim Crow era, for instance, on the buses, when they first had the bus?

D: (Clear throat) No, in the . . .

K: You know, when blacks use to sit in the back and all that.

D: Oh, yes we had to sit in the back and I remember I don't know now if it

Cont.,

D: was the Greyhound or the Trailways but, they use to ah, have a little curtain and the black would always have to sit back of that curtain and it be a lot of seats up in the front and if someone white got on there and decided they didn't want to sit up there first they'd push that little curtain back. We had to get back there and if it wasn't anywhere for us to sit we just stand back there best we could.

And we'd get on the City buses go to the back and sit with the motor back there and we'd be getting off from work and so hot, we'd sit back there on the back of those buses and it would be so hot. And the driver was white and we could be running to get the bus to get home and sometimes they'd wait until you get there almost ready to put your foot upon there and then they would just drive off.

K: Did you see anything like might have happen?

D: No, didn't anything happen we just had to stand and wait for another bus.

(Laughing)

K: Okay, you didn't see anybody/^{get}mad maybe on a certain day or something?

D: Um, ugh. It was just something you had to take

K: You remember anything about lynchings back then?

D: I've heard of a lot of them.

K: You never did witness any of them?

D: No, I didn't witness any. Thanks goodness, I didn't.

K: Well, you remember let me see . . . it was a dude named James Martin around um I guess around nineteen twenty-eight in Bolton, you remember him, he got lynched but, that was in Bolton thou, you don't remember anything about that?

D: No, I don't.

K: James Martin and Frank West. Well, what about (Clear throat) do you remember the Albert Lee Rape Case? It was in the forties?

D: Um, hum. Albert Lee. Was that here in Jackson?

K: Yeah, I think it was. He was a . . . I think he was a college student, I think, and they said that he raped a white woman or something.

D: Um.

K: You don't remember

D: I can't remember right now.

K: Okay ah, do you recall anything about the murder of Emmett Till, do you remember that?

D: Yes, I remember that now, I wasn't in that part of the state but, you know, I heard so much about it--it was so sad. Yes, I remember about that.

K: Can you tell me a little bit about it, just any little thing?

D: Well, ah, they say he was killed for just nothing ah, an awkward whistle that he made and ah, I think that the biggest thing at that time the white people didn't like the blacks when they came from the North because, that time the blacks and the whites were more intergrated there then they were here and they would think that they were pushing to try to try to get with the white women--the white girls or something here and they would just . . . when they found out that they were from there, look like they just had ah, envious feeling towards them and so, they said he made this whistle and ah, that was it. So

K: What he do, whistle at a white woman or something?

D: They say he was whistling at a white woman, he just whistled. They called it the whistle. I think they call it the wolf.

K: How do you do it?

D: I don't know.

K: (Giving demonstration) Something like that?

D: Something like that, um , hum.

K: Okay, ah, can you tell me some of the good things about the black and white relationship, I guess we done talked about some of the bad ones, can you tell me some of the good things about it?

D: (Laughter) Well, some of them were very good. Ah, I remember once that ah, I met a lady, she belonged to first Baptist Church and her name was Mrs. D. E. and I don't know . . . somehow we got to talking and she ah, she asked me to come work for her and she was so nice and she told me how she . . . how sorry she felt for the black people for being mistreated, so and ah, how she and she helped me so much and ah, at that time the First Baptist was sponsoring somekind of a Christian Leadership Conference it would be out to . . . some parts out there at Jackson State College and ah, she ah, paid my enrollment that I could go out there and attend this conference and she would carry me out there and pick me up. Now, that is one lady of course, she ah, left and went to Kentucky, but, she is one lady that was very nice and ah, she had ah, two grandchildren, at that time, I had two childrens. And here little grandson she would tell her daughter when he outgrew his clothers to give them to her and she would give them to my son and then she would go . . . at that time had a basement down Capitol Street and they would have bargains on basement . . . bargain basement and she would go there and buy things for me and her little girle to keep us with nice things to wear to church. Now, thats some of the good things. That was back in the thirties, I guess because it before my son that shall be thirty-nine was born. It was before he was born, so that had to be about in the thirties.

K: Okay, one last question I want to ask you like, (Clear throat), during what years you think the black white relationship was the best and what years you think it was the worst, you know, twenties, thirties, or forties for the best, twenties, thirties, or forties for the worst?

D: Well, I think it was the worst in ah, the sixties, when they pushing for a Civil Rights.

K: Um, hum.

D: Now, I think its in very good shape.

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