

JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY

JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

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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.

I, R H Bullard, 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 known, recognized, or contemplated, to Jackson State University, Jackson, Mississippi.

R H Bullard
Interviewee (Signature)

8/25/76
Date

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Mr. Bob Bullard was born in Jackson, Mississippi in 1905. He is the son of a brick manufacturer and one of six children. He has worked at French Camp, Mississippi and the Natchez Trace. He is now an assistant to the staff for Senior Citizen's Site.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW

The interview was conducted by Dr. Kathryn B. Weathersby at the St. James Activity Center on August 25, 1976. During the interview, Mr. Bullard discussed his earliest recollections of Jackson, forms of entertainment, church life, and school life as he remembered. He recalls that his early days were filled with school activities and work. He feels that the "good old days" were when he attended Poindexter Junior High School and worked in his father's brick-yard.

JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

ORAL HISTORY STUDY OF:
SENIOR CITIZEN'S

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE "GOOD OLE DAYS"

INTERVIEWER: Mrs. Kathryn B. Weathersby

INTERVIEWEE: Mr. Bob Bullard

DATE: August 25, 1975

SUBJECT: "Good Times" in Jackson, Mississippi

KW: Today, is August 25. And I am interviewing Mr. Bob Bullard, at the St. James Church Nutrition Site. Mr. Bullard, I'll like to repeat the purpose of this research project for you.

As we told you, when we got your permission to do the interview this is an Oral History Research Project. It is the Jackson State University Bicentennial Project, and we are interested in the information and most of all we want to capture the wisdom that our senior citizens have in the Jackson area. We are focusing on what you consider to have been the "Good Times " in the Jackson area, and we want information about family life, the church, the school, and things of that sort.

After, we have made the tape we want your permission to put the tape in the library so that others can hear what you have said about good times in the Jackson area. The tape will probably be listened to by students. It will be used if others are trying to do some kind of research of this nature so other schools might borrow and listen to the tapes and this is what we want to know how we're going to use it. And we wanted you to understand to begin with that this is what we are going to do with the tape. Now is that alright with you.

BB: Thats fine.

KW: Alright sir, thank you very much. In looking at the ah, biographical sketch that we made of you, it seems that you were born here in Jackson, Mr. Bullard, is that right.

BB: I was born here in 1905.

KW: In 1905.

BB: My father was a brick manufacturer.

KW: Yes.

BB: On Dalton Street, right where Pearl runs into Dalton. Pearl stopped there at that time.

KW: Um, ha. Thats in the Jim Hill school area, what is now the Blackburn Junior High School.

BB: Jim Hill School there is on the property of mine, part of it.

KW: Um, ha. Its on the property where the brick yard was.

BB: Yes.

KW: Is that so?

BB: Thats right.

KW: Um, ha.

BB: Thats right where the school is where burnt the bricks.

KW: Yes.

BB: Ah,

KW: What other kinds of things were in that area during that time, Mr. Bullard.

BB: During that time ah, ^{College} Campbell/was right there on Lynch Street which is part of Jackson State now.

KW: Thats right.

BB: And back up to Brick yard

And,

never was over there at Campbell College

is always seems to be a nice They played ball
back then. Ah, you know, I would have seen 'em if there had been
troublesome up there.

Now, my father employed up to ninety men a week.

KW: Y es.

BB: Some white, most of 'em colored. And it was all more or less a family type crew and you knew all of 'em by first name. I've been to a lot of their homes. Ah, the foreman was Charlie Shirley. Charlie Shirley was the father of Dr. Aaron Shirley. He in town now.

KW: Yes.

BB: Charlie had ah, two or three brothers that worked there at the same time. I have several pictures that were taken of the whole crew there at one time. I knew them all, there was John Taylor, lived over there on Lynch Street right acrosss the street where the main part of Jackson College is ah, there was a public school on Lynch Street just west of Rose. And across the street from that cemetery and it was

KW: Do you remember the name of that school.

BB: I forgotton the name of that school.

KW: Alright.

BB: Its a shame I have. Ah, I had forgetton about it but there were some I believe it was
They had a grocery store on the corner of Rose and Lynch.

Cont.,

And there was also a grocery store on Valley Street that was run by
ah, Stewart ah, oh, why can't I call his name. I use to go over
there all the time. use to call her
colored.

KW: Yes.

BB: And so, I bet his is still living.

KW: In the Jackson area now. Mr. Bullard lets go back just a minute
before we get so far. Because I have some questions I'm going to
ask you a little more about life in the Jackson area.

Ah, when did you get married? About when did you get married?

BB: I got married in twenty-seven.

KW: Um, ha, um, ha. And you've lived in Jackson all this time..

BB: Um, hum.

KW: Oh, very good. Alright, ah, what was your earliest recollection of the
city of Jackson, Mr. Bullard? What is your opinion of the city of
Jackson during the early years that you lived here?

BB: Well, I lived on Robinson. I lived on Magnolia and I re-
call that area but, ah, Robinson Street was not paved ah, Jackson
State Laundry had ah, laundry trucks driven by two fast
ponies. I've seen that laundry truck stuck on Robinson Street in
the mud. Early back there one wof the most beautiful sites that I
have to my memory is the site of the going down
Capital Street, pulled by three express horses.

Cont.,

Steam coming up, alread they had fire that was
across from the Post Office uptown Post Office. I recall
the street cars in Jackson in the early days, ah, it went as far as
the city limits on Robinson Street which was up at
all of that was pasture out there and I hunted out there. I re-
ember when they paved Farish Street with wooden blocks.

KW: About what years was this when they started?

BB: Ah, about the 1917.

KW: Um, ha.

BB: Cause the Flood they had a town creek flooded and most of them blocks
floated off. Ah, I recall those two floods. I was back there
hauling sand 1919, to sandbag a

was on the corner of Capitol and Farish Street.

I remember the old Hotel after it was burned down,
not before, I don't recall it before. But there was a water truck
across the street from the governor's mansion. Also, one up at
State Street. in front of the

Old Capitol or just down from the Old Capitol.

So, I remember alot of those things, we had a army camp, First World
War out at Livingston Park. And ah, it was quite the thing to go
out there and walk around on a Sunday and watch the soldiers in the
tents, and thats what they were using, tents.

KW: Was this considered a form of entertainment more or less for the people during that time?

BB: Thats right. We had no swimming pools. But, that didn't make any difference. Right there behind Campbell College, ah, we wouldn't think anyone could have ever swimmmed in it but, I use to go swimming in the creek.

KW: There was a creek at that time?

BB: Thats right. An old deep spring.

KW: Mr. Bullard, what do you remember about the schools during the time when you attented school here and earlier years? The activities of the school ah, in the Jackson area?

BB: They had baseball teams back then, just/they have now. It wasn't much like football. Ah, there was Poindexter School which was Junior High is now. And there was only high school, Central High. Ah, course I recall building a bar school but, Lee School was down there and Davis School ah, George School, that school I was telling you about on Lynch Street.

KW: Yes, the one that we will get the name later.

BB: Ah, I started to school at Poindexter I reckon in was about 1910 or 1911. Probably it 1911, and somewhere about 1914, I recall that ah, we had a cyclone through here that took the top off which was on West Capitol Street, where the Boy's club would meet. Ah, it was extensive damage. Bailey Avenue was real savaged.

CONT.,

Thats some of the bad things that happened but,

KW: But, its all a part of it.

BB: Count of all part of coming along.

KW: What about the academic program, your classes, kinds of things that they emphasized during that time?

BB: Reading, Riting, and Rithmetic. And, always the principal had a big bundle of hedge switches in the corner and if you didn't have your reading, if you didn't have your riting, if you hidn't have your rithmetic, or jargeons and whatever, ah, you were reminded of it you got it the next time. You know, I don't regret it at all

KW: No, I don't think so.

BB: Being one of six children, I may hot have ever gotton through high school without it.

KW: What kind of entertainment did you ah, have as a teenager, Mr. Bullard? What did children do during that time to entertain themselves?

BB: Ah, they went to the they had ball games. I bout to put it to you this way, when I got home from school I had three cows to look after. I had chickens to look afters, I had to feed the hogs.

KW: This was all on Robinson Street? there?

BB: On Robinson Street, right there just off of Poindexter. And, if I got caught up in that I had to ^{go to} the brick yard and work. I always had to do work. And, the little recreation I had now, I did go one or two winters up at the YMCA which at that time, was on the corner of West Pearl

and swimmmed. They had a swimming pool in the basement.

As far as I know, thats the only
one in town

might have had one Deposit Guaranty

Bank ah,

KW: What was the church like, Mr. Bullard and how important was the
Church in the lives of the people during your earlier adult years
and teenage years?

BB: I was put on a craddle when I was in 1905. Presbyterian
Church, and I was active in the Presbyterian Church, Boy Scouts
even up until today. Ah, I went to the Methodist
Church, which was directly across Adam Street from ah, Presbyterian
cause I had a girl over there, you know. Ah, most folks took a
very active part in the church. Everybody either belonged to
church or wasn't belonged. That wasn't just white, that was
colored too.

KW: the church was very important?

BB: Very important. And ah, I mentioned Charlie Shirley a while ago.
Charlie Shirley to the
Seventh Day Adventist. They had a church on Rose Street.
And ah, Charlie was very faithful to his church. Ah, there
was a lot of churches surrounding Jackson. Ah, I think they/had^{all}
probably every once ah, a day. But, on the
whole I wished we had a church the percentage of churchgoers
we had

Today, we've got all kind of facilities to keep children interested
in school.

CONT. ,

We feed them and picnic 'em. We ride them around. We send them off to conventions. Now, we didn't have that when I was growing up. But, ah, still there wasn't enough other things that would ah, like we have now that will keep us from going to church. So, the church was the center of the community, you might say.

KW: Do you remember such things as dinner on the ground and the revivals?
Did they have tent revivals during that time? Is it renowned?

BB: Oh, yeah, they had revivals. They ah, I can call some very early
revivals and I tell you something else they had and then there was
your came

KW: What is that again now?

BB: A

KW: What is that, Mr. Bullard?

BB: Well, its an entertainment in a tent. And ah, they had all kinds of programs. It was sponsored by the Capitol Street Methodists Church, and it was held on part of that ground there. Ah, gypsy Smith had a tremendous revival in Poindexter Park. As, I was a youngster and some of the songs they sanged there I sing them all the time now

Oh, I can name a dozen of them. I think they did old Jackson a lot of good. Course, I remember these later ones and Billy Graham came to I'm talking about way back.

KW: Certainly. You were in the brick ah, making business. What was some other ah, common occupations during that time among the people in the Jackson area, Mr. Bullard.

BB: Cotton Oil Companies ah, Mississippi Cotton Oil was there and still there on Gallatin. Ah, McGowan Coffee Company, I miss McGowan Coffee Company because I loved to smell that coffee. It was on Gallatin Street. Ah, we had Mississippi Boundary ah, old that was about the best of all what all we did have.

KW: Did they have the Sugar Cane Mill?

BB: Oh, they had the Casket Factory here.

KW: Casket Factory, um, ha.

BB: Down on what is now Highway 80.

KW: Were there sugar cane mills in and around the Jackson area during that time?

BB: And what?

KW: Sugar Cane Mills.

BB: Oh, yeah. My father had a sugar cane mill. And there were lumber companies here. They sold timber. Some of them didn't handle anything but then there were even lumber companies

KW: What about Street Venders? People who go along peddling vegetables and other things.

BB: Oh, I miss the Street Vendors. They would have bells and they had little spring wagons. They were up and down the street. They would come regular enough that you would look for the same ones all the time.

And get fresh vegetables. It really was nice. Its a great deal.

KW: Mr. Bullard, you said that you ah, had to work, quite often while you were attending school, after school and this kind of thing, tell me a little about family life in general? What kind of values were emphasized when you were a boy in the family?

BB: The family was very close. . . . in my particular family. I can't tell you about all of them but, ah, most families that I knew ah, and some of them even today were still close. For whatever one of my brothers or sisters what they done, the tie was close enough until we separated why we didn't lose track of one another.

KW: Yes.

BB: Ah, . . .

KW: Do you recall anything about the Opera in the early years ah, as a form of the better so kinds of entertainment in the Jackson area? The literature shows that there were several Opera Houses in the Jackson area during early years. Do you remember any of them?

BB: Yes. There was one on Pearl Street ^{and} ah, /later it became the Jackson Hardware Company and now theres this ah, printing company I believe or Blue Print Company the last block on Capital and I don't recall the name of it. Then there was the Central Theatre that ah, I went to many a plays in the Central Theatre. Course, its been demolished. It was on the last block on Capitol Street.

WK: You mentioned going out to Livingston Park to watch ah, the soldiers as a part of the weekend entertainment. Were there other specific kinds of things that took place on weekends as entertainment that didn't necessary happen during the week for people who were working or in school?

BB: Always on Sunday between the City Hall and the Fire Station there was a zoo put on by the firemen. And ah, there was always a crowd there. We watched the jackals,^{the} monkeys and the other....

SIDE 2 of TAPE I

KW: There it is

Now, what about health services in the Jackson area during that time, Mr. Bullard?

BB: I recall that they ah, did have a health department ah, if you had a ah, contagious disease well, you were diptheria t fewer, or anything like that. And I recall one time going up to City Hall and seeing an experiment that they were trying on mosquitoes for malaria. They did ah, raise mosquitoes there in bowls, mosquito meadows, and they got ah, a number of convicts from Parchman. They let those mosquitoes bite 'em to see if they would get the malaria like the way they were finding out they malaria was carried. So, that there was some good bit of effort being made along that ime toward health is concerned. Ah, they did go around the city ah, after that with/kerosene and sprayed all the places where water

CONT.,

was trapped and mosquitoes were breeding.

KW: Was the doctors work load pretty heavy during that time?

BB: I never had no trouble. I don't think they was. Ah, they
I don't believe the work load was heavy.

KW: Mr. Bullard, what about services to people in the homes such
as electricity, running water and telephones?

BB: All of Jackson didn't have running water. We had running water
on Robinson Street and we had sewage. We had a telephone. Our
number was 311 so you get an ideal that the operator had given
you the number you wanted.

The lights were a little odd in that you bought the number of
watts that you wanted to use. Ah, if you wanted to use 60 watt
bulb, you wanted to use five of 'em well, you could turn on
five of them. One of those five was a hundred watt bulb.

Then the lights would go flickering. It go off and on and you
couldn't do anything with them.

KW: The consumer couldn't cheat?

BB: Couldn't see. So, you would have to turn a light off ah, we
don't have anything like that today, but course, you can buy more
than the five, sixty watts. You can buy as many as you wanted
but, they had it fixed so it would go to flickering when you
started burning as much as they as you could pay them for.

KW: What about telephones, were there telephones then?

BB: Yes, there were telephones then. There was ah, not too many I think the number at the brick yard was 39, so you can get an idea about how far back that might have been with that lower number.

KW: Mr. Bullard, ah, one of the forms of entertainment that was popular among the colored people during early years were the Rabbit Foot Shows and the Silas Green Shows that were downtown in the Farrish Street area. Do you remember anything about them?

BB: Not too much because, the fact that I had ah, to work but, all the men at the brick yard were talking about it all the time. And my knowledge is not the first hand on that.

KW: Alright, this concludes our interview Mr. Bullard. We certainly appreciate your participating because we feel that the things that you have said will contribute a lot to our understanding, our heritage in the Jackson area, and especially appreciating where we've come from.

END OF INTERVIEW