

JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY  
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

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

MRS. SERENA WALTON

Interviewed

by

Mr. Tommy Johnson

on

April 29, 1976

O. H. 76.14

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.

I, Serena Brown Walton, 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.

Mrs. Serena B. Walton  
Interviewee (Signature)

10/12/76  
Date

### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Mrs. Serena B. Walton is a sixty-eight year old resident of Jackson, Mississippi. She was originally a resident of Yazoo City, Mississippi. In 1937, she married and made her home in Jackson. She attended Alcorn College during the Depression years and later attended Jackson State College. She had worked as a teacher in Yazoo City prior to marriage and remembers those years as very good ones.

### SUMMARY OF THE INTERVIEW

The interview was conducted by Mr. Tommy Johnson accompanied by Miss Deborah Denard on April 29, 1976 at the home of Mrs. Serena Walton.

During the interview, it was learned that Mrs. Walton had recently been in an automobile accident but appeared to be in generally good health. The interviewee offered some good information and seemed to be fairly knowledgeable about the subjects discussed. She was able to recall the fun, misery, and everyday existence of her early years. She was able to contribute information concerning health conditions and black plantation owners. Her father owned one such plantation.

The "Good Old Days," as Mrs. Walton saw them were the days when she was a child. These days were filled with games and early recollections of the city of Jackson during the 1920's, 30's, and 40's.

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INTERVIEWEE: Mrs. Serena Walton

INTERVIEWER: Mr. Tommy Johnson

SUBJECT: The "Good Old Days"

DATE: April 29, 1976

Testing. Testing.

J: Mrs. Walton we're about ready to get the show on the road. Tell me what does it mean to you when you hear the phrase, "The Good Old Days"?

W: Well, the only thing I can think of is what my children thought of when they were little. They would say to me, 'Mother, tell us something about the "Good Old Days"? I would tell them things that ah, I did back in the 20's and 30's. Things that ah, I did that was interesting--things that I did as a child--games we played, incidents that took place in our lives. I should think maybe to the youngsters now the "Good Old Days" would mean probably the 30's, 40's, or 50's. Anything in the past to them is the "Good Old Days." When ah, people who are adults now were children this would mean "Good Days" to them.

J: Well, what is your early recollections of the city of Jackson?

W: I can go back to 1937 when ah, my husband and I married. Jackson was ah, very, very segregated, so we as Blacks lived in one section. Our streets were unpaved. We received no titles when anyone addressed us other than people whom we were friends with or people who knew us. Our salaries were low as people being employed in any jobs whatever it might be.

The economic condition was very, very, low especially for Blacks. I guess that's about some of my early recollections. Houses were of very poor conditions. Very restricted larges families lived in small houses.

J: So you came to Jackson in the 1930's around 1936?

W: Yes, I had been here before as a student at Jackson State just during the summer months, but I came to live in 1937.

J: Where is your original hometown?

W: Yazoo City.

J: You came to Jackson in your youth and decided to live here?

W: Well that husband here to live with, so that was one reason I came. His home was here; so, I came to live here.

J: Was all this a good or bad recollection you had in your opinion of the city?

W: Well, I had been use to low economic conditions as a child and ah, to me it was really a kind of a step-up because I was a married woman now. This was just something I had been use to and I didn't see any change to take place so naturally, my feelings about it were just ah, about neutral or I accepted it.

J: Do you know of anybody else who has a recollection similar to yours?

W: Most of my friends or people you talked with had no other recollection of things that were different because that was a way of life with us at that time.

J: What are your recollections about your early school days?

W: My early school days began in a one-room, one-teacher rural school in Yazoo County with the wood-burning stove. We took our lunches to school in bags, buckets, or pails. (Laughter) That lunch consisted of maybe some syrup with bread, or potato and bread, or whatever our parents had to put in that bucket.

In the winter time, we would put buckets on the heater and let that stuff get hot and boy, "It was good." We had outdoor toilets. We had the buckets for drinking water with one dipper. If your parents were wise enough they would give you a cup to take so you wouldn't have to drink out the dipper with the other children.

The ah, o' out-door toilet was down the hill--kind of a little hill on the side of a pond from the school. Most times children had to gather the woods-boys especially. In the afternoon, we would have some heat after the gathering for the next day.

J: Well, where did you attend school?

W: Yazoo County Rural School--an old school called the Clark School,

It consisted of grades one through eight with one teacher.

J: Do you recall any good things about your early days in grade school?

W: We loved our friends. We loved the outdoor playing. We loved the outdoor activities that we did as a rural.

In a rural setting, you enjoyed the things that are outdoors. The fishing, berry gathering, plum picking and what not. It was just a lot of fun to us because that was our way of life.

My father happen to have a little plantation, so as a child we felt that we were a little bit above most of the children who lived on farms.

J: How do you describe the good times during these years? What did it take to have a good time during these years?

W: When the teacher would have a program and we had a chance to dress up and go to this program, the parents would bring baskets and we would eat afterwards. Maybe the community gathered--that was a real good time. Or the boys played a game of ah, baseball with another rural school not too far away--that was another good time.

Going to church was a big time especially when the church would have some type of activity like a Easter Program or a Children's Day Program, or if the church would have a rally that was a big time.

J: How did you have fun as a teenager, a young adult, a middle age, and a senior citizen?

W: As a teenager, my form of fun was very limited, because my mother had died when I was very small in this rural school. My grandmother, who lived in Yazoo City, took us (my family--the family of children.) So, my teenage years were very restricted because my grandmother was a person who believed in strict discipline. My activities were very limited. I was very glad that I had the opportunity to go to school, and I was very glad that she insisted that we not miss a day in school. So whatever took place at school was fun to me.

Programs, school parties, ah, just being in the class and the outdoor playing, recess time, and having little friends around school was the biggest thing that I enjoyed. Occassionally, the school would permit the class to take little walks around the community--those were things of interest.

J: Excuse me ah, I'll get back on that subject a little bit later. Now, you say that you went to Jackson State. I'm going there now, and I have a very extreme interest in the history of the school.

I want to know two things: Who was the president when you went there and what was it like as a student?

W: Doctor Dansby was president at this time. It was just a two-year college at this particular time, because at this particular time Jackson State was in a very low economic condition. They were struggling to exist so the ah, two-year college was all that they had at this particular time.

J: . . . (Interruption)

W: Teacher training was just about the ah, biggest thing that emphasis was put on.

J: Well, how was the physical plant itself? Was it good as compared to the old times?

W: Well, there were very few buildings and the buildings were old. They were heated with the steam heat and they were ah, crowded. The physical condition was very, very, poor.

J: Alright, getting on down to the main subject, describe your recollection of the church in the "Good Old Days" in Jackson?

W: The church that I attended was a frame building. The preacher was considered one of the good preachers. In my estimate, he was ah, very mediocre. He preached from his text. He use things to make people get happy. The singing was a giving out of hymns—the people follow in hymns. The service was very lengthy and much emphasis was put on donations. Revivals were very boring because they seemed to be more of a money raising event than a soul-saving event.

J: This is in Jackson isn't it?

W: Right. This right there in Jackson.

J: What's the name of the church?

W: Mt. Calvary Missionary Baptist Church.

J: Did you hear of anything in the "Good Old Days" such as dinner on the grounds, tent meetings, and camp meetings?

W: Oh, yes. They would have rallies, which was a money-raising and a fun time, for everybody. The women would fix baskets and they would fix long tables outdoors. Maybe they'd stretch out boards for many people to sit on the grass and eat.

J: Now ah, Mr. Calvary was in Jackson. So, the space around it was very

limited. There were no tent meetings there although they would have basket affairs, box suppers, and things like that. Fish fries, they had a little building that they used for fish frying at night. It was quite interesting.

J: Well, are you or were you any member of a Masonic or sorority?

W; No. Church was as far as my membership went.

J; Well, do you recall any history making events such as the Depression that had any great impact on your life?

W: Oh, do I! I was in college during the Depression years. I was a student at Alcorn College. My father was trying to keep two children in college. Had it not been for our being able to get a job to earn our board, we would not have been able to stay there. The board was very cheap. The tuition was ah . . . There was no tuition. We were able to get a book or two. Our clothes were very limited and my daddy wrote once and said, "Children it's tight like that." Because it was hard for them to live back at home and try to keep us in school, had it not, as I said, by our being able to get work at the college to take care of our board, we would have not been able to stay there.

I can remember once my daughter and I . . . (my daughter) . . . sorry my sister and I didn't have money enough to buy s-o-a-p to take a bath with. My daddy sent us about fourteen dollars, and my sister callously came away and left the closet door unlocked and somebody took that money. We laughed. The Depression years were very, very, terrible.

J: One interesting thing that existed during these years since you were a student back in this year--Jackson State's Doctor Dansby was pressuring the state to support Jackson State. Now, so I've heard that ah, Alcorn actually opposed turning Jackson State into a state instution.

W: Well, I can't say whether Alcorn opposed or not, because my first college years were at Alcorn. (Rivalry instinct noted.)

During the Depression years, we were able to stay there so that we could finish freshman college. After that, I was on my own because my daddy was not able to send us to school. So, my school years at Jackson State were mostly summer work.

J: Summer work?

W; I can't say that Alcorn opposed to Jackson State being a state school or not. It may have been true. I met people who opposed



to Jackson State being a State school. However, becoming a state school took place a number of years after the Depression. I was married when Jackson State was made a State school, and I can say that I hope and I feel that I had a little help in this because I was teaching in Yazoo City at the time. I was living in Jackson with my husband. I was teaching in Yazoo City. I remember my husband being a Jackson State graduate asked me to see if I could get a group of people in Yazoo City and Yazoo County to sign a letter to Judge Barber, who was at that time, the president of the State Board of Institutions of Higher Learning. We got the letter up and Principal Endy Taylor, helped us to work this letter to send to Judge Barber. A number of teachers in Yazoo City signed it--a number of teachers in the county wouldn't sign it because they didn't believe it could be done. They didn't want to take a part in. Anyway, we sent this letter in and I can remember President Reddix called me after he heard that we had done this and asked me about the letter. He wanted a copy of it, but I was very sorry we hadn't kept a copying of it.

So when the legislature met, they accepted it. At first, it was made a two-year State school and later on a four-year State school. Of course, it was this ah, four years that we were trying to get through this letter--trying to get them to take on.

J: Alright. Do you recall the Flood of 1927?

W: Oh! Yes, indeed. I lived with my daddy out in Yazoo County, which is about five miles from Yazoo City. I'm sorry . . . I lived with both my daddy and my grandmother, because when school was going on we were living with our grandmother. We would go out in the country in the summertime.

Now in early spring, we heard that the levee up there around Greenville had broken. People were urged to move out. But, we didn't think it would happen like that. So, that evening we could see that water coming into the yard, but we still didn't know it would take place like that. Before day, water was coming into the house. It just happen that ah, my aunt's husband took us in a boat and carried us to the hills of Yazoo City. Water was there for around a month. People had to stay away from their homes for around a month. So, the 1927 Flood was a very exciting, depressing time. The Red Cross did much to help people at that time.

J: You were in Yazoo City when the Flood hit Yazoo City?

W: Right. I wasn't married then. I was a youngster.

J: Can you give any recollections on what that might have had on Jackson? What effect that the Flood might have had on Jackson?

W: No, no. My business in Jackson was very far between at that time. I had been here once.

J: What are some of the things that you did to earn a living?

W: I beg pardon.

J: What did you do to earn a living?

W: As a child, I helped to work on the farm. After I finished high school, I took the examination and qualified to teach in Yazoo County. I taught. The school was running five months at that time. During the time that I wasn't teaching, I was working on the farm. Working on the farm and teaching was my way of earning a living.

J: Do you know of any other person that did your type of work--if so, how were your relationships with them?

W: Oh, I had many friends teaching in Yazoo County. My relationship, I feel was very good.

J: Which one did you like the most?

W: I beg . . .

J: Which type or which one of the people you worked with happen to be most liked by you?

W: Oh! I had several. I can't pick out one I liked more than I do the others, because I had several very close friends. I remember a Miss Mabel Woods. She was a Mable Stuckley at the time. She was a very close friend of mine.

J: She's dead now, isn't she?

W: No, she lives in Yazoo City. Clemetine Clark, who was a graduate of Jackson State, was a very close friend of mine. Louise Howard, who was a gym teacher at that time, was a very close friend of mine. See, I can't say which one was a better friend. Lucille Scott, was my very dear buddy. We came all the way through grade school. She was a very close friend of mine. She's dead now. She was a very accomplished person.

J: Were there anybody you disliked?

W: I can't point anyone I disliked. I really can't. I had some kind of bad feelings toward a lady once at Jackson State, but I can't think of anyone I really disliked.

J: Describe some of the good times you had at work?

W: I enjoyed being with my friends (Loud Banging Noise) . . . We enjoyed the old recess time when you didn't have to take children to the lunchroom. We could sit around and ah, exchange our ideas--talk. I enjoyed the little ah, get-togethers we would have on the weekends. If it snowed, or if the weather was awfully freezing, the heaters wouldn't work so well at the school. The children couldn't come to school, so that gave us a chance to get together and have bridge parties--interesting things like that.

J: Well, do you recall any of these things that existed or any that are now in the city of Jackson? I'm going to name them in a list: A washer woman, a quilting bees, community canning, butchering hogs, picking sugar cane, settlers and peddlers who sold their goods when they were singing. Do you recall any of that?

W: Oh, do I? Surely did. I recall many of those things especially the street peddlers. The rural parts, the sugar cane cutting and making molasses at the molasses mill I use to love to see the mules carrying that pole around to grind the sugar cane. And ah, the big pan where they boiled the syrup and that with chewing sugar cane was a lot of fun. Going to the patch getting a arm load of cane--sitting around and chewing it was alot of fun. Picking peanuts was another big time we had. I didn't care too much about potato digging time, but peanut digging time was a very lot of fun for us because my grandfather would let us take the horse and hitch him to the buggy to haul peanuts back to the house. We had a lot of fun doing that.

J: What about washer women and quilting bees?

W: Well, washing was a way that many Negro women had to make some money. White people would bring their clothes to the house where the washer woman would wash them and she washed and ironed for those people. My husband's aunt was one of the ah, "great washer women" in that time. When I came to Jackson to live, she was still taking in washings for several families. Drying clothes was a big problem because they had to depend on the sunshine to dry the clothes or the wind. Many white people brought clothes to Aunt Ida because she ironed so beautifully. They liked their husband's white shirts starched and ironed, and that was a big job for them.

My grandmother would get people together to help her quilt a quilt. That's where I learned to quilt. Mama didn't believe in anybody sitting down holding their hands. We had to learn how to quilt at that time---that was a big fun. I liked it because I could hear all the gossip that the elderly women talked about, and I was a good listener.

J: You know, even in my days, which I grew up in the sixties, I can still recall canning, quilting, and butchering hogs.

W: Oh, yes! Canning - my grandmother had a little outdoor diary that my grandfather had built where she kept her milk and butter. She didn't have a refrigerator. The only time we would get ice was on the weekend to keep the meat fresh for Sunday, because I had to go over to the market and buy the meat Sunday morning so you could have some fresh meat for Sunday.

She kept plenty of milk out there in the big crock. We as children liked to slip out there and get milk and put cornbread in it. A big potato house, where they kept potatoes, was another interesting thing. We would get potatoes and roast them in the fire. We even roasted peanuts.

J: Baked potatoes?

W: No, it would be roasted potatoes--put hot coals and hot ash on them.

J: Oh, yes, I remember that. I remember that.

W: . . . And roast them up in the fire. We would have a time eating potatoes with butter on them.

J: What was your family like?

W: I came up in a large family. There were six children. My mother died when the sixth child was a baby. My grandmother took us. She already had three grown children at home. So, I came up in a very large family. I thought twelve was a pretty (Loud Noise) . . . good size family.

We had togetherness in this family: Breakfast together with grace being said, dinner together. Of course, school children ate after they came from school. You didn't have a lunchroom at that time. At least two meals were together meals. Sundays were quite together and Sunday School was a must in our home. Taking baths in old tin tubs was a must on Saturday nights getting ready for Sunday so you wouldn't be so late getting ready for church. I can say that the family that I came up in was a quite together family with strict rules that you didn't question.

J: So you said that your grandmother . . . Which one of your grandmother's . . . Was it on your mother's side?

W: My father's side. My mother's parents were dead and so was my mother.

My father's mother and father. School was a must--you had to attend school. You would not miss a day no matter how cold it was or what kind of weather. We had to go to school.

J: What were the good times like in your family?

W: In the buggy going for a ride, going to pick berries, watermelon eating in the front yard under the big pear tree with a lot of friends around, playing games together--most of my friends came to visit with us, because mama didn't allow us out of the yard. We had our fun in the yard. School, as I said, was one of the places that I enjoyed because it was an outlet for my energies.

J: Well, do you recall anything like "Hamboning"?

W: Is that a game where they slap on themselves?

J: Yeah, yeah.

W: Ooh yeah, my brothers could really play that hambone. (Demonstrating) Slapping up against his thighs. Yes. Hambone and popping their arms and doing the "Balling the Jack." It wasn't a game, it was a dance that my aunt taught us--Balling the Jack. We liked that.

J: So ah, you know, when I was coming up they use to do that. I never could hambone.

W: I ain't either. Well, I never tried. I always thought that it was something the boys could do, but my brothers could really do the hambone. I learn to do many things that my brothers did: Shooting marbles, slingshots, climbing trees, playing ball--I could even out-run most of the boys around in my brother's category. I was a bit "tom-boyish."

J: In hamboning, is it the type of fabric that you have or the way you would do something?

W: No, I think it was the way they would hit (Giving demonstration) . . . hit their thighs. It was the way they would slap their thighs. That's what that was. Some way they had of slapping, some of them could really do it.

J: What were your impressions of the big bands of the 30's and 40's?

W: Oh, I wasn't too familiar with the big bands, because I wasn't around them. Now, my brothers went to the minstrel shows, and they enjoyed bands there. We weren't allowed to go to the minstrel shows, My brothers wouldn't ah, take us. They said it wasn't a place for us. Of course, my parents . . . My daddy and my grandparents wouldn't

allow it. So, I'm not too familiar with the big bands.

J: If you went out there and enjoyed yourself during the "Good Old Days," which did you prefer; Big bands, rag times, or blues?

W: It really made no difference with me. I didn't go out to hear them.

J: Describe the songs that you sang in Church?

W: "Father, I Stretch my Hand to Thee," "Amazing Grace" - hymns like that.

J: Do you recall the guitar players, the banjo . . .

W: Oh, yes and it was a lot of interest to us to ah, hear the guitar players. Some of them would play for a school affair, and then some would just play for the fun of playing. So, that was a lot of fun.

J: And, these people met on North Farish Street?

W: Yes, but I didn't go down there. I never knew what was going on down on Farish Street.

J: Do you recall (Cough) anything about an Opera House that used to exist between Pearl and Minerva Streets?

W: No, I don't recall that.

J: Well, what are things that you particularly enjoyed doing on the weekends?

W: Sometimes we could have a picnic. Most weekends were filled with work.

J: What was it like going to town and everything?

W: Oh, yes. A group of ah, youngsters liked to get together and go to town because ah, that was one of the big things you could do on Saturday. I shopped, spent a little money if you had it, and see you friends.

J: I can recall even when I was coming up in the sixties that going to town always seemed--especially when you go to a city that you haven't been in. It just always seemed to be a big thrill that you've never been there, but now was ready to shop. (Laughter)

W: Yeah, going to town on Saturdays was one of the big weekend attractions.

J: Did you go to anything like socials, dances, or anything like that?

- W: After I got ah, older around in the later teenages, we would go to a social. Church had socials sometimes for the youngsters, and we enjoyed going there. School socials and sometimes a group of parents would give us socials.
- J: We use to call these "sock socials" back when I was in high school.
- W: Yeah, but it's a long time between your high school and mine.
- J: Yeah. (Laughter) Did you hear of anything called tent revivals?
- W: Oh, yes. Some visiting preacher comes in and puts a tent up on a vacant lot and had a week or two of revivals. So, tent revivals were quite prevalent.
- J: Do you remember what the business community was like in Jackson in the "Good Old Days"?
- W: There were stores where people shopped downtown. The downtown area was a big shopping area at that time. There were some community stores that sold ah, few groceries and things like that. A few black people had stores. There were places like barber shops, beauty parlors, restaurants located in some areas.
- J: Well, do you recall any Black businesses that were flourishing, and if so, would you mind naming them?
- W: Well, now, I can think of the barber shops down on Farish Street as being a big business. There were a few places where they repaired shoes. There were a few beauty shops--one or two tailor shops, a few grocery stores. That ah, was just about the extent of the Black business. Some of us had pretty good business in two or three grocery stores at one time.
- J: So ah, will you say that the business community has changed now?
- W: Most certainly. There are a variety of businesses now. There are more businesses now.
- J: Well, how is the business especially the Black business just different from what they were?
- W: The scope is larger. The items that are being sold vary. There are more. The physical plant is better--still quite limited I think compared to other businesses.
- J: In your opinion, what is the condition of Black businesses between 1930 and 1960? What has been the general condition of Black businesses between 1930 and 1960?

W: Oh, there are more now. People are able to get money to go into business now, while at that time, they just . . . Unless they had a little money of their own, they couldn't go into business, because they couldn't borrow money as ah, businesses can now. So, the business has extended quite alot.

J: We're talking about utilities now. What is your early recollection you had with the telephone?

W: Scared to death to rent a telephone, because I didn't know how it was going to work. My earliest recollection of telephones were the telephones that you had to give that operator your number and she would ring your phone, or if your phone ring you had those ah, long hornlike things that you put to your ear and talk on it. So, that was the earleist recollection.

J: That was before the earphone wasn't it?

W: This was kind of a hornlike phone that you put to your ear and then you talk in a phonelike mouth piece. When you pick up the receiver the operator say, "Your number please," and you tell her the number you wanted, and she would dial it.

J: Well, ah, where can you recall that the sewage system came into your community? When could you recall that you became affiliated with a sewage system?

W: When my husband and I married in 1937, we rented one side of a house- a little apartment. An outdoor toilet was the type of toilet we had to use. It was in later years that ah . . . It was four or five years later that ah, we were able to get sewage. We had running water, no bathroom. We had just a faucet.

J: Well, when did your family first get electricity?

W: Well, we were burning a lamp at this time when I married in 1937. There were other homes with electricity, but in 1937, my husband and I used a oil lamp, kerosene lamp, outdoor toilets, and by the time we got the sewage, the man whom we rented from was able to put electricity in the home and we were able to get electricity. We also use the ah, coal furnace for heating my bedroom. It wasn't a furnace, it was a grate where you burn coal.

J: Coal was that ah, as dangerous or similar to burning wood in an old wood stove?

W: Yes, but coal is in lumps, you see. They burn lumps, whereas in ah, burning the wood stove you had certain lengths depending on the length of the stove or either a fireplace you'd burn wood. But, this coal comes in lumps. You started your fire with kindling and put



put the lumps of coal in there. It was dangerous if you'd got up against it, but I don't guess it was more dangerous than the open-space heaters.

J: Well, when did others in your neighborhood began to get electricity?

W: I was a child when ah, we had kerosene lamps. In later years after I was an adult, somewhere around in the six . . . in the fifties, the city of Yazoo City, where I was living at the time, extended electricity into the area where we lived. We were able to get electricity which must have been somewhere around in the forties.

In rural area, the rural electrical companies extended electricity in those areas somewhere around about the forties or fifties.

J: Do you recall any of the first people to get electricity in your neighborhood?

W: Yes, I remember a family that seemed to have been well off economically. They were able to get electricity, and they were also able to get a phone. Others did not have electricity in their homes. They were using the kerosene lamps.

J: Do you know their names? Can you recall their names?

W: I remember Mrs. Lucinda Jones was the first family I remember with electricity and with a telephone. Her husband was a preacher, Reverend Jones.

J: Was owning electric houses sort of looked upon as some type of status symbol?

W: Oh, yes. Mrs. Lucinda Jones was the "it family" in that community because they owned a very nice home, very spacious, beautiful, had electricity, had the telephone.

J: What is your earliest recollection of health and welfare?

W: In 1927, when the Flood hit Mississippi especially Yazoo City, where I was living, the Red Cross came to the aid of people by giving them food, clothes, whatever their needs were. The Health Department gave the typhoid shot and that's the earliest recollection I have of the health and welfare.

We had to be vaccinated, of course, when we were kids for smallpox and that was done at the Health Department. So, the only welfare was give was from Red Cross.

J: Can you recall any Black nurses, doctors, and midwives. If so, who were they?

W: Well

W: Well, I was delivered by a midwife. My great-grandmother was a midwife who delivered all six of us. Her name was Rose Green. There were many midwives. There were midwives who would take cases of white people after the doctor had made deliveries. I remember, Mrs. Annie Williams was one of the most famous midwives in Yazoo City,

J: She's a black woman?

W: Right, she was a black woman. The black nurse that I remember was Miss Nettie Perkins. She's the first black nurse that I remember who had a pretty good job. She worked with the Health Department here in Jackson, Mississippi.

J: What about Black doctors?

W: When I was a child, my family doctor was a black doctor, Dr. L. T. Miller. He was quite a famous doctor. He was the first doctor at that Afro Hospital. He helped get that hospital started.

Dr. Robert Fullilove was a black doctor in Yazoo City. Jackson had several black doctors: Dr. Leroy Smith, Doctor Christian, Doctor Barnes - dentist.

J: Do you recall the opening of the Sally Harris Clinic in 1940?

W: My first child was born in the Sally Harris Clinic. Dr. Leroy Smith was the owner and manager and doctor there. My first child was born at Sally Harris Clinic.

J: This clinic is closed now, isn't it?

W: Oh, yes.

J: What were the greatest health hazards between the periods of the 1920's and the periods of the 1960's?

W: Some of the health hazards were malaria. Many people suffered with malaria because of ah, mosquitoes and the low economic conditions of the houses. Tuberculosis was quite a hazard also. I know of a number of people who had tuberculosis. There were many skin diseases where children would catch them.

J: So during the early part of the century of your life, the main thing that people could catch was hazardous to your health was something caused by germs?

W: Right. I can remember how many children had whooping cough. We were always afraid of it. Mama would keep us in right closely. No one in our family had had whopping cough, but many children had whooping

cough. It was very contagious.

J: Do you recall the Great Flu Epidemic between 1918 and 1920?

W: I was a very small child, but I remember my aunt had the flu and I heard them talking about Doctor Fullilove's wife dying with the flu at that time. It didn't impress me because I was small. But, I heard ah, people talking about having the flu. When a doctor would come to see a person, he was hoping they wouldn't have the flu. It seemed as if the only thing that they ah, could do for flu was to go on and let you die. They didn't know what to do for it.

J: I guess after doctors started inventing drugs to treat certain diseases - infectious diseases, then you had these other diseases like heart diseases, cancer, and high blood pressure beginning to become a major health hazard. Am I right?

W: Right, because we never heard of it when I was a child. And even ah, when my teenager years, you didn't hear people with high blood pressure. They may have had it, but no one ah, spoke about or familiar with it.

J: Do you recall the recreation here in the "Good Old Days"?

W: Oh, yes. Baseball was a big sport and there were some football. We liked that very much. I was very, very anxious to get to football games; of course, dances, and old Crystal Palace was a lot of fun.

Minstrel shows, traveling around was a lot of fun for people who went to them. My brothers always like going to minstrel shows.

J: Do you remember any athletes . . . Now you went to Alcorn and Jackson State both, do you remember any of the athletes that they had at that time? If so, how were they treated?

W: They were treated ah, like heroes among our people because at that time the games were segregated so among our own people that they were given quite a bit of praise.

I remember a fellow named Boyd at Alcorn. He was a great player. One of the big players died not long ago-- E. T. Hawkins. He was a great football player.

J: Jackson have had something like Marshall and ah, I think this guy named Stewart.

W: And Higgans. They were great players.

J: Do you remember such things as the Rabbit Foot or Silas Green Shows?

W: Oh, my brothers would have a fit when the Rabbit Foot was coming

W: Oh, my brothers would have a fit when the Rabbit Foot was coming to town. When Silas Green, that was one of the big minstrels, was coming to town those minstrel shows were exciting events for young people.

J: Do you recall any fairs or anything since you didn't go to Jackson?

W: Oh, yeah. The circus time was a big time also. The tent circuses would come to town and have big street parades. The big Barnum Bailey Circuses and Ringland Brother Circuses was a good time. The fair was another big time because that was quite an outlet for our energies to go to the fair, ride, play games, and what not. So, the county fairs, the state fairs, the circuses were attractions that we enjoyed very much.

J: What about the Crystal Palace?

W: That was a big place where people had many of their entertainments especially the big dances. The Crystal Palace days were days where you really had fun.

J: Where was that at? Was that off Lynch Street?

W: Naw, down on Farish Street and up over ah, where Ruben Anderson 'em had an office up in there. That upstairs part was the Crystal Palace.

J: So you say that ah, baseball was the popular sport?

W: Yep.

J: Where did other sports such as football come along into the scene?

W: Well, football was played quite a bit then also.

Deborah Denard: Excuse me Mrs. Walton, are you getting tired? We can stop it right here.

W: Okay, and it's about time for them to start serving.

J: Alright.

W: Thank you.

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