

JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

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

O. H. 76.15¹⁷

MRS. CEOLIA HERMAN

Interviewed

by

Dr. Alferdteen Harrison

on

June 14, 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 used for purposes of research, for instructional use, for publication, or for other related purposes.

I, Mrs. Ceolia Herman 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.

Ceolia Herman
Interviewee (Signature)

1839 Oklawaha Drive
6-14-1967
Date

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Mrs. Celia Herman was born in Simpson County, McGee, Mississippi in 1904, on February 28. She came to Jackson in 1919 to go to high school while living with her sister Mrs. Willie Rankin. (Willie Rankin married a man who had the same last name as her maiden name.) Instead of going to school she married, and worked as a nurse for different white families and then in a cleaners. During this time she spent two years in Baton Rouge working in a cafe with her brother. Mrs. Herman has been an active church worker.

INTERVIEW SUMMARY

At the appointed time for the interview Mrs. Herman was being visited by her sister and other relatives from Michigan. However, most of them left or remained quiet until the interview was over. The exception was her older sister, Mrs. Willie Rankin, who entered the conversation about half way through the interview. They, Mrs. Herman and Mrs. Rankin, both talked about their recollections in McGee and in Jackson as well as Meridian. So, about two thirds of the way into the interview we strayed from the subject of the "Good Old Days" in Jackson. However, on a whole the "Good Old Days" for Mrs. Herman were when she was younger and did not have to worry about anything. She and her sister both spoke proudly of their white

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INTERVIEWEE: Mrs. Ceolia Herman

INTERVIEWER: Dr. Alferdteen Harrison

SUBJECT: "Good Old Days"

DATE: June 14, 1976

SIDE I OF TAPE I

AH: Today is June 14, and I'm in the home of Mrs. Ceolia Herman, 1839 Oakland Avenue in Jackson, Mississippi. Mrs. Herman I understand that you were born in Simpson County, Magee, Mississippi on February 28, 1904, and you came to Jackson in 1919. You're seventy-one years of age. Now, what was Jackson like when you first came here?

CH: When I first come here, it was a small town. The taxies were being driven with horses.

AH: You mean the public transportation and taxi. . . taxi cabs?

CH: Was taxi cabs was a buggy. Down through times you know, they get this ah, . . . but, anyway when I first come to Jackson that was what it was like. Jackson didn't have but three streets and they were made with brick. They had trolley cars run from ah, Capitol up to State Street and out West Capitol and on South Gallatin was trolley cars. I think them were all the cars--street car lines they had here. And all the other streets were dirt, in Jackson, Mississippi.

AH: Did you ever ride on any of those trolley cars?

CH: Yeah, I rode on 'em, a nickle for a trolley car.

AH: Nickle? (Laughing)

- CH: One nickle. You could take a dime and ride from one end to the other one and come back home. We use to ride 'em, and my pleasure was going to something when it did happen--the Crystal Palace Ballroom, Vicksburg to the Independence Day. That was all my pleasure. My church record, I worked in St. Peter Church when it was a little brick . . . little plank building on the riverside.
- AH: Now, you were carrying me a little fast, I want to go back just a little bit now. (Laughter) Where did you live when you first came to Jackson?
- CH: I lived on South West Street.
- AH: Um, hum.
- CH: Dirt street.
- AH: Um, hum. Now, how old were you then?
- CH: Me? How old I was?
- AH: Um, hum.
- CH: I was born in 1904. I'm seventy-one years old. See, I can't just think . . .
- AH: So at that time you were ah, fifteen years of age when you came?
- CH: Fifteen years of age.
- AH: Now, did you go to school in Jackson at all?
- CH: No, I didn't go to school in Jackson at all, I went in Meridian. At the Academy school, in Meridian? That was the name of the ah, you know, the high school there.
- AH: You finished high school there?
- CH: No, I didn't finish because my mother wasn't able.
- AH: Um, hum. Now, why did you come to Jackson?
- CH: Well, my sister lived here (pointing to her Nephew who walked through the room) his mother. And my mother sent me. . .
- AH: Whats his name now?
- CH: Thats J. C. Rankin. My sister lived here and I come to live with her.

We were supposed to go to school, me and my sister Mary. We were the two youngest ones.

AH: Um, hum. Y'all came here to go to . . .

CH: Came here to go to school. Well, you know, by courting we got married. See, I met my husband, about you know, about a week after I were here and I just wanted to marry. So, you just went right ahead and had a wedding and got married. We didn't say have no wedding, we just married. But, there were a house full of folks when we married. And I married on Railroad Avenue at his cousin's nieces house. And so, I lived here awhile and I left here and went to Chicago. I lived in Chicago for two years, then I come back to Jackson and I have never been away since.

AH: Why did you leave?

CH: I went with my husband.

AH: Um, hum. Why did he leave?

CH: Well, he just went where he could get a better job, I reckon. I don't know.

AH: Did he get a job up there?

CH: Yeah, he got a job railroading, and so, I came back home. I worked at Swift Company in ah, Chicago.

AH: Did your husband come back with you?

CH: No, he went . . . He lost his mind, and thats why I come back home to live.

AH: Oh, I see.

CH: Um, hum. And ah, they were running trains and we use to go up and look at the trains and they'd have ah, trains going to Gulfport, different places and we'd just go look at them when we were young. And thats all the pleasure that we had. Of course, it was fun to us. And we enjoyed life.

AH: Going to watch the railroad?

CH: Yeah, and watch different things just to see, and see it run, you know like trains running. We didn't have no cars.

AH: Was that here in Jackson?

CH: That was in Jackson, Mississippi, here.

AH: Was that down here at the train station, or just anything . . .

CH: See, down south Jackson you see the railroad go down to Gulfport up there them little bitta railroads. I just caught them and go. A and B goes down that way . . . used to go that way and we just watched the trains and sit up and look at the trains. See. Um, hum. Well, they would have fairs here, we'd go to the fair. We'd enjoy the fair.

AH: Now, what were the fairs like, describe one to me?

CH: Well, it was nice to us. You know that's all we seen is animals and they'd have you know, shows just like they do now. It was very nice. Didn't cost you much to go in, about fifty cents something like that, a quarter. We'd go in. And, my church, I went to St. Peter Church and I come to be a member of Pearly Grove. And I quit Pearly Grove and went back to St. Peter.

AH: How long were you here in Jackson before you became a member of St. Peter's Church?

CH: Well, we were in Church all our life.

AH: Is that a Baptist Church?

CH: I was raised up in a Methodist Church and my parents were Methodists. Ah, Goodwater Church at McGee, Mississippi, that's where I first come to be a member of church, and I was about ten years old then. I had to go to Sunday School and I was in every program and you know, and helped raise money. If it was any money to be raised, you know, we'd do it--have little programs and things? You know, how people back then would have things. Everybody would enjoy it and drank soda pops. Wasn't no whiskey there. And ah, Mr. Jones, a man by the name of Mr. Jones was the taxi man for the colored people, see. They had a sewey or coupe and horse.

AH: Whats a sewey, now?

CH: That's the buggy, what they call buggies, but its two seats in it.

AH: Um, hum. The sewey?

CH: Yeah, the sewey had two seats, see.

AH: Um, hum.

CH: See, for passengers.

AH: Yeah, do you know Mr. Jones' first name?

CH: No.

AH: He'd take you to church?

CH: No, he would be the taxi if we wanted a taxi to go somewhere.

AH: If you wanted one?

CH: Um, hum. We'd walk to church. We walked every Sunday. So, we walked everywhere we went. I'd walk when I first went to school. I went in Simpson County at ah, the McNair School. That was the public school. I walked ten and five miles to school everyday and I was six years old when I first started to school--five and ten miles a day. We'd walk to church to another church, like we were going too. We'd walk there for five, 'bout ten miles from our house. We had to go because our mother made us go, see.

AH: Um, hum. So, you just kept that practice up when you got here in Jackson?

CH: I kept that practice up and I still got it up.

AH: Um, hum, um, hum. You still go to St. Peter?

CH: I go to St. Peter right over here, but I'm a member of Clarks Street Church. . . a member of Clarks Street--Greater Clarks Street on South Gallatin Street. And ah, well that was our "Good Old Days." We had plenty to eat. Meat weren't but five cents a pound like that. You could get a lot of food for a little money. I just lived better in those days, than I do now. Now its a hard-time look like. You know, just look like everything is high, but its more in telling it now than it was then but, you know. It weren't no more in telling. Everybody mostly had to go to church. Mighty few people didn't go to church. They weren't mean people like they is now. Still its just wiser now. See, its wiser now. You see, the Bible speaks of all these things. But still, we ah, went to church and like they were going to have a "Tractor Meeting", we called it a "Tractor" Meeting like they call it revival, we called it "Tractor" Meeting. ("Tractor" is a phonetic spelling for a word which probably has it origin with the word "treh" to journey. It refers to annual revivals in the rural southern churches of Mississippi). Have big dinners and things.

See, "Tractor Meetings", going to be at such and such a church, well, everybody helped. It weren't like it was now. Just like you'd help me with my church, I help you, see. And, everybody had nice . . . Well we just had . . . Its look it was better to me than it is now. See, the people are younger now, and they 're not, you see . . . I'm seventy-one years old. I just born in that time. White folks was nice to you; I were nice to them at that time.

AH: Oh, really? Um, hum.

CH: There wasn't so many mean white people. I'll tell the world . . . (Spoil). They were mean like they is now, I imagine, but still they didn't show it.

AH: Um, hum. Well, thats interesting.

CH: Well, my mother moved when I got grown--big enough to work for her. After I married, I come home and hoped to take care of my mother. My sister died and left four childrens and I helped raised them. They were very nice. It was very pleasant because, you see, in those days, like your children and you die and leave them, your mother would be the whoper. Didn't have everybody whopping a child. Just one person whopping him; his mother, parents, or grandmother. Then if they had to fall on they aunties, the aunties would. You see, we didn't beat them. Mamma done the whopping and we'd do the working. We just lived nicely and everything.

AH: Um, hum. Now ah, . . .

CH: And we used wood stoves, coal oil lamps and it was nice.

AH: Um, hum.

CH: Didn't have no gas, no electric. . . only, I reckon they had it in the stores or either, you know, using them little like they used at that time, some kind of a little electric lights, or something, but we didn't have all that. We used the wood stove.

AH: Um, hum.

CH: And everybody was using wood and stuff, go to the country and go fishing and all that and everybody was just nice. You know, colored folks were nice to one another.

AH: Um, hum, um, hum. So, now when somebody ask you what were the "Good Old Days" what do you think about.

CH: Thats what we called the "Good Old Days."

AH: Um, hum., um, hum. When everybody was nice.

CH: Was nice. . . everybody was nice, and everybody would speak to one another.

AH: Um, hum.

CH: We would have prayer meetings and everybody would go, see, and enjoy it. Now, them was the "good days." Like, you was fixing for the church everybody would pitch in and help you . . . Everybody went wanted to help. And everybody lived and got along fine. Live and one would die. See, people didn't die then like they did now. When a death would be, it would be a surprise sometimes to people.

AH: Oh, really?

CH: Um, hum. Well, you know, so-and-so died, and they'd go on that would be the sadness. . . Then everybody would try to go to the funeral that could. You know, in the end it was just alike, some of it is now. Them was our good days. When I got big enough, you know, me and him-- He'd always carry me to the ballroom--- Crystal Palace Ballroom.

AH: How old were you when you started going to the Crystal Palace?

CH: I was grown and had been married. See, I didn't go to a dance when I was young, we would go to church. Naw, they didn't have us going to no kind of dance when we were young, in our teenage . . .

AH: How old were you?

CH: In our teenager age and things we didn't go to dances. I was about eighteen or twenty years old when the first dance I ever went to--about twenty years . . .

AH: Did you already know how to dance?

CH: Now, I didn't know nothing about no dancing--go to look at you dance.

AH: Oh, I see. Did you learn how then?

CH: No, I haven't never learn how to dance yet.

AH: Oh, I see. (Laughter)

CH: (Laughter) We'd just be there.

AH: Ah, ha, just be there enjoying yourself while other people were dancing.

CH: Um, hum, yeah. You see, when we go to a dance we'd have to have on outfits for a dance. You know, make our dresses long, things like that. Some of them had on short dresses, because they weren't able to get one.

AH: Now, ah, what was the Crystal Palace like? Could you describe it for me?

CH: It was just a plank building up there . . . two-story plank building . . . You go upstairs to the dance. They has something up under it. You know, like a store or something. It might have been something where they were selling, you know, something, I don't know. I just go upstairs.

AH: Now, where was it located?

CH: On Farish Street.

AH: Was it decorated in any sort of way that you know of?

CH: I didn't never see no decoration, just seen who danced in there. You see, that's where all--most people was--what they called first class now would go. Um, hum. That was where to go. See, these here other outfits I didn't go to them.

AH: Um. What kind of outfits are you referring to?

CH: I'm talking about like these here places they run . . . you know, dancing and things then.

AH: Honky-tonk?

CH: Honky-tonks. Honky-tonks. Because they didn't allow us there and then we were scared to go--might come up with some trouble or something. See, I didn't see the trouble.

AH: Oh, why didn't they allow . . .

CH: They didn't allow us to go to such a joint.

AH: Who is they?

CH: My mother 'em.

AH: Ah, I see.

CH: Don't care how grown we got, if you'd been married forty years and she tell you don't do something, you couldn't do it. You minded. We never was hard-headed and grown. That would be bad children, they say. (Laughter) And ah, like if ah, childrens you know, they are just weaker and wiser now. And then we didn't know, what children know then. We were better than children, in a way. We weren't no better than children, in a way. We weren't no better than the children is now but, we just done better. We weren't no better because children would fight then. See, we would have our ups and downs but, we'd make up and yonder we go. We didn't have no knives, nothing like that. We weren't to carry something like that. See, we didn't know of nothing like that. Like they have a Tractor meeting in the country in my hometown out in the country, white folks come there and eat your food, you'd go to they church and eat.

AH: Oh, really?

CH: Really. We done that.

AH: Would that be close around here in Jackson or in Meridian?

CH: That was in Simpson County, down there at McGee, Mississippi. A gang of us colored children, you know, we'd slip off from our parents because we couldn't go through the woods. When the white folks were having church and they'd give us all food, like we wanted some of that church food, we would go over to they church. My parents wouldn't know we'd gone. We never would tell them. And the white folks say, "Well Isabel we fed your children so-and-so and they would come to our church, see, and we'd feed them." Our people would feed them, thats the way we lived in my hometown. I've never seen days like some of them have been.

AH: Would these be people that you worked for?

CH: Naw, we wouldn't work for 'em. Everybody had their own farm, white and colored. You know, if you wanted to go on and make a little money why you could help them. Thats the way it was. And, like somebody had a farm in my hometown, and the head leader would die some of the people would come and work it out, and clean it out for 'em--helped them lay it by, and things like that.

AH: White folks would do you like that and you'd do white folks like that?

CH: Yeah, I didn't do white folks like that. The white folks couldn't come like the colored person on his place. He'd say, "Go and help Isabel." "Go over to so-and-so house you know, he died. Go over there and work

his wife's place out" or something like that. That's the way they lived in my hometown. They really lived good. I don't know too much that went wrong down there.

AH: Well, let's come back here to Jackson now, at the Crystal Palace. I still want to know what you did there? (Laughter) Did you drink?

CH: No, I didn't drink.

AH: Was there drinking going on there?

CH: I imagine so, you see, I didn't know. They'd have soft drinks. You could drink a soft drink or something like that and we'd just have a nice time.

AH: But, were there any other liquors.

CH: Whiskey and stuff, I imagine so. I never seen it. See, we didn't see that.

AH: Now, tell me about some of the bands you heard there.

CH: Let me see, let me see . . . Joe White and ah

AH: Haynes Nicholas.

CH: There were just bands you know. It would just be there or four playing. It wasn't bands like it is now. Just be three or four mens playing that knowed how to play music. And it be ah

AH: The piano players.

CH: Um, hum.

AH: Can you call any of their names?

CH: Well, they just be a band and if they didn't have a piano, they just be playing their music on the bands.

AH: On the other instruments?

CH: And the piano players, well, you just didn't know all of 'ems name. You'd just see them like you would anywhere else.

AH: I was just going to ask you how often you went to the Crystal Palace?

CH: Everytime they would have a "do" like, you know, Easter. Well, on a

Easter Sunday, they'd give that "do" and you danced until . . . you'd be up there 'til about three o'clock sometimes, you know. You'd go late and they'd stay there a long time. Well, that would be all the fun you could have and enjoyment. And like, going to the Independence Day where you have ballgames and everything and just laugh and have more fun and peoples and everybody have fun.

AH: Right. Now, I want to ask you one more question about this Crystal Ballroom. Would you go there one Saturday night and then go to church the next day?

CH: Yeah, we would have to go to church.

AH: How late would you stay there?

CH: Well, you see, the girls you know, the girls had to go home. They'd go and stay two to three and they'd go home, myself. Because I just never did like to stay no where long . . . too long. I'd enjoy it. But, I just wouldn't like to stay too long.

AH: Oh, I see. Now, we kept talking about Independence Day, Declaration Day ah, tell me about it?

CH: Well, Declaration Day was nice. They'd have the flags up, the old soldiers be marching in Vicksburg.

AH: White and black or just

CH: White and black. They didn't have a section. They'd be marching and everything. Just look like everything in those days people would cooperate more better.

AH: You weren't aware that ah, white folks were suppose to be here and black folks were suppose to be some place else?

CH: Oh, yeah, we were aware of it.

AH: I'm talking about when you went to the Declaration Day?

CH: Ah, yeah. We were aware of it.

AH: White folks stood at one place and the Blacks at another?

CH: Naw, they didn't stand at one place, they all marched together. Most of them be colored because them were the biggest 'em soldiers was living in Vicksburg. Um, hum. They'd be like a sergeant and lieutenant and things. They'd be leading the parade, you see, and white and

colored I never noticed, they do now I say.

AH: Now, tell me about some of the activities they would have. This would be on May 30?

CH: Um, hum. Well, they'd have a dance. Um, hum. They'd give a dance for the people. They enjoy all them wanting to go. So we'd go, you know. We'd be there. We'd go over there in the morning. We'd stay all day. Well, we'd have to be home at night. We'd have to come back home and what they had at night we really don't know. Ugh, ugh, we really didn't know but of, course, they'd have a dance.

AH: Um, ha, they had food?

CH: Yeah, they'd have food.

AH: Free?

CH: Free.

AH: Free food all you could eat?

CH: Yeah.

AH: Barbeque and stuff?

CH: I don't know whether it was barbeque or not. It was cooked. Just we cooked it.

AH: (Laughing)

CH: But they could cook better back then. They'd have cakes, pies and things. They just really could cook back then. Make a pound cake that just melted in your mouth. People could cook back then; chicken pies different things and things and that'd be nice.

AH: Now ah, what kind of activity would they have other than the marching? Were there games that you could participate in?

CH: Games, I noticed. I don't know. Because, I didn't . . .

AH: Mostly parades and . . .

CH: Parades and things like that. Thats all. Parades, they'd have parades and things like that; thats what the soldiers and things be marching in the parade. And there would just be people standing just--just like they'd be here mostly at the big games and things. Just be

people all up and down the road looking and everything. (Interruption) There's my nephew.

AH: Now, I wanted to find out how you went to Vicksburg? How would you get there?

CH: Well, they had ah, T-model, you know here Fords that look . . . and get in there.

AH: Did you own one?

CH: Naw, I didn't own one. Just ever who we'd go with had one. We'd just rent one, you know like that. Wouldn't have to . . .

AH: Ask somebody to take you somewhere?

CH: Yeah, someone would take us.

AH: Um, ha. Would a church group go, organize and go or just . . .

CH: It would just be the peoples. Everbody don't go. Peoples, you know, from the church and different places want go, just like me and you and ah, several more girls in the church we'd tell our parents we wanted to go and well, we'd go. They'd let us go. But there would be some grown people in there with us. We just couldn't hop up and go places just us.

AH: I see. Now, how about ah, and social organizations that you belong to outside of the church.

CH: Well, I belong to the Eastern Stars. I joined that but, it was later in the years when I come to be a woman of my own when I come into that. Of course, I belonged to the church clubs. And that was all when I was a girl.

AH: Now, how old were you when you came a member of the Eastern Star?

CH: I was about twenty something . . . thirty?

AH: Where did you join at, here in Jackson?

CH: Right here in Jackson.

AH: Um, hum. What order was that?

CH: That was Clarence Winter's Order.

AH: Clarence?

CH: But he wasn't the man.

AH: Clarence Winters?

CH: It was ah . . . You see, thats the first lodge that I ever knowed about. Mr. and Mrs. . . . were the head of the lodge. I don't know . . . who and Clarence Winters come to be the head of it later. When . . . died. And, I belong to the Elks. Now, Medgar Evers, I joined that when he was the leader of it.

AH: Who?

CH: Evers.

AH: Medgar Evers?

CH: Um, hum. See, I was grown then and I joined that club. I was in his funeral. Now, I quit them.

AH: You quit both of those?

CH: Um, hum.

AH: You don't belong to the Elks or the Eastern Stars?

CH: I don't.--You know, I just got too old to go and I just . . .

AH: Too old? You seem to be vigorous. (Laughing)

CH: I'm seventy-one years old going on seventy-two. You know, I'm too old. (Laughing) Because I just quit. Course, I see the members and talk with them and everything. And we would go from different places. We'd go to Canada. They went to Chicago. I'd suppose to be there on the float, but I didn't go. I went but, I went on to Detroit to see my sister and didn't get back in time. (Laughter) You know, how it was. I was grown then and the world had got a little weaker.

AH: Now, when you were a member of the Eastern Star, how did you have a good time?

CH: Ah, we would have a good time. We'd have turn outs and you know meetings and different things. We'd just have a nice time. That was the best organization that I ever belonged to and the Daughters. That was the best I ever belong . . .

AH: What about the Daughters now?

CH: I said the Daughters and the Eastern Stars, them the best organizations

I've ever been in.

AH: Is this the Daughters now of Isis?

CH: Yeah, um, hum.

AH: Ah, just being with the other women . . .

CH: With the other was a nice time course, I become to be the . . . one of the matrons.--You know, one of the leading daughters in the Daughters, But I wanted . . . They had to get a healthier woman because I didn't want to be one. And we'd ah, catch this excursion train and go to New Orleans--you see--and places with the daughters and things. When they'd turn out in New Orleans and different places we'd go. Then you see, it wouldn't be so much, because we could go reasonable and come back reasonable. And that was in . . . around in the thirties--first of thirty,

AH: Yeah, now tell me about . . . You used the term, "turnout"?

CH: Well, I called it a "turnout" you see, going to New Orleans that was the Eastern Stars and Masons turning out down there. They'd have a meeting. See, we call it different from y'all, y'all educated,

AH: Yeah, thats what I just want to understand, thats all. (Laughter)

CH: We'd say a turnout. We're going to have a turnout so and so, you see, Have a nice time, plenty to eat and everything,

AH: Right.

CH: Everything I went off on at that time in my life well, they'd feed you,

AH: And you'd have fun.

CH: You'd enjoy life. It wasn't like it is now. Somebody's going to fight, get drunk and all that. If they done, we didn't know it.

AH: Now ah, with ah, the Daughters of Isis, was that under our . . .

CH: Naw, it was under ah, the Daughters and the Elks . . . It was under you see, this man was the head of it when I joined.

AH: Oh, Evers right, okay. The Elks, oh, I see . . . The Elks had daughters of Elks, right?

CH: And they'd have Eastern Stars of the Masons, See, they were two different kinds of a lodge. They were the same, I imagine. You see the

Elks wear them caps and things. And, the Masons too but, you know, he's a Mason and a Elk. See, all of it is one thing, I'd say. Its one thing but, they'd be different set-ups.

AH: I see. Now, lets come back and see whether you told me all you knew about these Orders, now and if you had a good time with ah, your Order?

CH: Yeah, it was just good. It was just good. Anything you'd have fun-- would and you know, with the people well, it was just nice. It was really nice.

AH: Did you have any relationships with the white Orders at any point that you recall?

CH: Well they may I don't know. I didn't know. We didn't have none with them. I guess they did because, it was the same. I don't know whether they did--the leaders. See, the members didn't have it.

AH: Now, lets talk a little bit about work? What kind of jobs have you had?

CH: What kind of jobs in my life?

AH: What kind of work? How did you earn money? Have you ever worked for a salary?

CH: In working here?

AH: Um, hum.

CH: Wait a minute . . . the first money I earned in Jackson working--I nursed a white kid, Edmond Asher's daughter. (Nelen?) Asher

AH: Asher.

CH: They are dead now. Because he called me before his wife died and wanted me to come out there. And my nephew come here and told me and say "They got something for you." I said, "They didn't give it to me when I needed it, I ain't going." And, he called me and talked with me about thirty minutes. And, also his cook.

AH: You cooked for him?

CH: Naw, I didn't cook.

AH: Oh, I see,

CH: I've never cooked for a white person. Okay. And, he died in the

Mississippi Nursing Home. But they were grown when I was a kid, I worked for them. You know, I worked for them was working for them before I married.

AH: Oh, I see when you first came to Jackson, you came here and you got a job working for . . .

CH: Yeah, and was going to work 'til school started.

AH: What was that name now?

CH: Edmond Asher, and Edmond Asher was his wife's name. I went to the Coast with them and everywhere. Everywhere they'd go out of town, I'd be with them with that little kid. Um, because the child wouldn't mind them. He would mind me because I would whop it. So, I whopped it in Gulport there once and a white lady was telling her . . . and she told her I'm raising it. Said, Ceolia is raising it she need to whop. See, we didn't never fall out about nothing like that.

AH: Um, hum. Now how long did you work?

CH: I worked for 'em for . . . I don't know how many years I worked for them. And, then I nursed a lady. She was sick, with Dr. Rayfield here. Her name was Jennie Gracey. Jennie Gracey and she lived on President but, she was a colored woman.

AH: Jennie Gracey was a colored woman.

CH: Yeah, she was ah, Professor Brinkley's wife Auntie.

AH: Brinkley?

CH: Professor Brinkley.

AH: Of Brinkley School?

CH: And, ah, Dr. (Parker?) had that drug store out on Lynch Street. That was their wife's Auntie. And, I nursed her until she died. And I started out to nursing and I learned how to nurse then because, you know, what education I had, I could use it--I nursed there and I left here and went to Baton Rouge, La. and run a Cafe . . . help run a cafe with my brother. See. My brother give me half what was made in the cafe and his wife's half. He set it up for us and she would run it one week and I'd run it one week. And ah, I come back here. I went to work at Jackson Steam Laundry.

AH: How long were you in Baton Rouge?

CH: I was there two years, in Baton Rouge, because my mother . . . my sister got sick and I came home. That boy's mother that went out of here just now (Referring to one of her company members.) She got sick.

AH: What was his name?

CH: Landy McNair. Her name was . . . McNair. His mother was named . . . McNair. His name is Landy McNair. And I come back here and I went to a job my mother was working.

AH: Is this Jackson Steam Laundry?

CH: Naw, she was working for a white lady on Gallatin Street. I went there to see her you know. I just had got into town. A white lady said " you got a pretty daughter." And I was looking at my mother working. Tears was almost running down my eyes. And I asked God then you see my mind went on God deeply then, I said, "Lord, I said," If you will spare me to get me a job--I don't want my mother to never hit another lick." I had money I could saved. So, I told mama to tell that white woman, she wouldn't be back on that job and she never worked no more long as she lived because we took care of her - me and my sister. Me and my sister in there, we're taking care of her. And so, that was the happiest thing I ever seen. And she died in '59.

AH: What kind of work was your mother doing?

CH: Cooking. See, I never cooked for a white woman. She said, "Feed me." I couldn't eat. See, mama didn't know, I just couldn't eat to see her work . . . I couldn't eat. See, my father died when I was about six years old.

AH: And thats how your mother had supported herself by working in . . . in a

CH: Um, hum.

AH: As a cook for white folks and all.

CH: Um, hum.

AH: What did you have against . . .

CH: We farmed.

AH: Oh, I see.

CH: We farmed and when we come to town, we had to do different things. And so, then I went to work,--when mama quit that woman.

AH: At Jackson Steam Laundry?

CH: Naw. What did I do? That's when I went to work for the Ashers. And I worked. Then I nursed a lady. Then I quit there and I went to Jackson Steam Laundry then. And, I worked there until . . . a long time. Then I worked at the City Laundry. They put up a little laundry on South Gallatin and I worked there. Then I quit there and I went to Whitefield. I nursed out there. And I worked there four years and I quit because my mother got sick and I stayed here with her. I was married again then. And I stayed with her. And I

AH: So Herman is your second married name?

CH: Um, hum.

AH: And what was your first married name?

CH: Bradford. And ah, I worked down and I almost ran Rebels Cleaners down on West Capitol here, since this freedom stuff. See, I was working there and I worked there until I retired.

AH: Um, hum. Now how long have you been retired?

CH: I've been retired ever since I was sixty-two. You know, I retired then, but I still worked on there until I come to be sixty-five. Then I quit. Least my husband got sick and I quit. I retired for good. So, I have nursed some since then but, . . . I've nursed in the St. Dominic's Hospital here week before last.

AH: Oh, really.

CH: I've been working out there.

AH: Just part time.

CH: Naw, I was with a lady, what you called sitting. But we were head nurses. They done put her in a home. So, I quit Sunday before last. You see, I don't want her to know that. I just went down with her.

AH: You just do that occassionaly?

CH: Yeah.

AH: You enjoy that kind of thing?

CH: Yeah, I enjoy it. You know, when you're old and the more you get about the longer you'll feel good. You use to get and take you a nice hot bath

at night And get up and go to work in the morning; doing something you feel better. I don't just sat around here and look at the wall. I do what I can but, it's not all that much I can do. And sometimes sitting down looking at something you can do that. Where sitting at home looking at the walls --then you got to get out among the people. Don't care how old you is or what you got to go. Don't never let age carry you down. Just try to do. I goes and I finish what I can.

AH: Now, I want to ask you of all these kinds of jobs that you've held, which one did you enjoy the most?

CH: Which one I enjoyed the most? I enjoyed one just as good as I did the other.

AH: You liked working?

CH: Yeah, I like working? See, I was from a farm. And I had to pick cotton; I had to hoe, I had to plow. I was plowing when I was thirteen years old, because my father died when I was a little bitta kid. See, I wasn't big enough to work, even go to school when he died. I reckon, I would have been educated in Alcorn just like they would have, if he'd been living.

AH: Just like who was?

CH: Like my daddy and all of 'em.

AH: Oh, your daddy had been educated at Alcorn?

CH: Yeah, my daddy, my peoples all kinds . . . You see, I tell you --we were pretty good livers. All of 'em, my grandfather had land. He gave his sons homes. We had our own home.

AH: What was your maiden name?

CH: Rankins, from Simpson County. I had an uncle who gave us school land.

AH: What school was that?

CH: Ah, they called it Brown Springer. It was just a little plank house, you know.

AH: Yeah, but it was school, was all we had. (Laughing)

CH: And ah, and the Carters and the Sellers all of 'em was our people. (Company Interruption) How are you feeling?

AH: Fine, and you.

CH: And the (T?) Thats my sister. Thats Mrs. Willie Rankin and this here is Mrs. Harrison.

WR: How do you do, Mrs. Harrison.

CH: Don't now, we're on a tape.

(Tape cuts off for few seconds)

CH: The cheapest wages I got in Jackson was \$7 a week.

AH: So, that was good wages at that time?

CH: Thats right, \$7 a week. I worked for \$7 a week in Jackson! And the last wages, I got in Jackson here was . . . I was getting \$90.00 a week then I retired.

AH: That was from the laundry?

CH: Yeah.

AH: Um, hah. Which laundry was that now?

CH: That wasn't a laundry, that was the Rebels Cleaners.

AH: Oh, thats right, the Rebels Cleaners.

CH: Um, hum. Thats where I retired.

AH: Is that a black-owned?

CH: No, it is white-owned? And Wils . . . ah, the (P?) Cleaners was down on West Capitol by the station down there. Sure was.

AH: Well, let me ask you if you remember a few other things related to work?

CH: Yeah, well do that. Um, hum.

AH: Ah, do you remember a group of people called "Washer women"?

CH: Yeah, my mama was a washer woman. We helped wash whenever she would have the clothes there. They'd wash for the white folks,

AH: How did that work? They'd bring the clothes to the house?

CH: Yeah, ah, they'd bring them or either you'd go and get them, You had to tote them.

AH: Um, hum. You wash and iron and you fold and put them . . . and iron and starch them. And they'd come at 'em if they'd didn't come then you would have to carry 'em back. Maybe a dollar and a half a washing, or two dollars for washing and that would be all you get-if they had a big family you get two dollars. If they had a small family, you wouldn't get over a dollar and a half. A dollar. Right on! Because, (Laughing)

(Mrs. Willie Rankin enters into conversation)

WR: Thats your work, you tape all the time?

AH: Ah, now how about "Quilting Bees?"

CH: Well, quilting; my mother 'em quilted all the time.

AH: Um, hum. They had quilting bees?

CH: Yeah, they quilted.

AH: How did that work?

CH: They'd just get a needle and put it in some . . . wooden frames. You know, fix your top like a table here, sew it all together and make scraps and things and ah, lining and put cotton in it. They had some kind of . . . what they call it?

WR: Let me cut in. She's talking about quilting bees--string those bees. You know, they'd string 'em, maybe wide as a bedspread or a quilt. And they'd string those bees. String some this way, some this way, some that way. They'd be just like a spread. Some bees were on the stock.

CH: You mean beads you wear around your neck, ain't you?

WR: Naw, she's talking about the "quilting bees". They were raised just like you raise wheat or corn. But you go there and just strip those bees off there, and they'd have holes through 'em. And you would take them and you would have this heavy thread and you would quilt a little this way, and a little this way, and then you would quilt it together and it would be just like a bedspread, a sheet.

CH: Um, hum.

AH: What would you do with those now?

WR: Well, you would use 'em on your bed.

AH: On your bed, ha?

WR: Yeah, it would be just like a spread.

CH: I didn't remember that, I'm older than she is. I'm about four years older than she is.

AH: Um, hah. Now thats something new. We call them, quilting bees?

WR: Um, hum. Then, when you would make the quilt, maybe you wanted a style. You'd cut them little square pieces like that, lay some this way, and some this-this way, and you'd make a square in the middle and you'd sew all of them together--with a needle. Well, thats the whole stock then you would put a piece around there and it would be squared. Well, you could make it long as your bed, and they'd be in squares just like that, but then little pieces of cloth would be made into them. You know, just like a little piece like that. (Demonstrating) And you could put them together, but, on the end you have to make so many squares as long as your bed, maybe ten squares. Then you would get a strip about like that (demonstrating), and sew this square on this strip, put another strip, and sew that square on that strip, and you'd make your quilt. Then you'd hem 'em just like you hem a dress and bedspread. They had some kind of thing that they had to spin.

CH: Weaving; weaving.

WR: Wait a minute. They would take this cotton after it was ginned and spin it and it would take this cotton after it was ginned and spin it and it would come up just like this crocheting thread . . . not crochet, this other heavy thread, what you make these shawls out of now. You could take them make your bedspread, make you a dress, make you a cape, make you a . . . But they had some kind of straws they would make just like they do now but, it was made out of wood material. They would knit that together cross that thread, ooh, and make you a jacket. Then make a sweater, and things like that.

AH: You did that in your home?

WR: Yeah, you'd do that right in your home. Mama had a spinning wheel when she was making thread. It would be just like this heavy thread. You know, now what they quilt heavy . . . like wool or cotton. When she turned that spinning wheel, it was a thing there and that thread would go on that big thing there. Just stand there and spin and spin but, you would have some cards, about this long, (Demonstrating) and they had little thin things in 'em like wire. You'd have to card them out, and roll them up and they would be like a little roll. You'd card out as many as you thought you were going to use, that day.

You'd take two or three days to spin it and you'd put that in there and that would spin, spin, spin around and around, and around, and around, and around, and around, and around until they'd make this heavy thread. You know, like what you buy in stores now, in
(Interruption)

WR: And ah, ruh, then they had a thing on there you know, it would roll that cotton on it, and thread on it, so it wouldn't stick together. And you had big things just like . . . they'd be wooden straws. And you could get them things and make squares, ah, ah, ah, make children caps. It would be just like knitting now, but it was different. The material and the needle ah, like they had crochet needles they would be wooden needles, made out of wood--just pure wood. I don't know; they had different things to make those things with. But them spinning wheel, probably sometimes they have homes--with big old spinning wheels in 'em. And they would go over. Mama turned that thing and that wheel go, woo, woo, woo, woo, woo. We set over in the corner.

AH: That's very interesting. Now, were there times--I am asking both of you this,--when groups of women perhaps, organized, and they had--quilting bees?

CH: Yeah, yeah, we'd have quilting like.

WR: Um, hum.

CH: Your mother and myself, and Willie and all us

WR: Well, there's so many would come to every one of these.

CH: To everyone of the quilting--see just the whole crew.

AH: Oh, I see.

WR: Maybe there would be a group of them.

CH: See, just the whole crowd.

WR: Just like you have a group, organization, just like mission

CH: And that would be good times.

WR: Um, hum. Or Eastern Star, or the Elks or something.

CH: They would quilt out one everyday.

WR: Well, then maybe there would be fifteen or twenty women there. Well, they'd work at your house this week, and next week they'd go to my

house and do the work, the next week they'd go round . . . They all belong to the club, 'til they made up what they wanted. And probably and they wouldn't do . . .

AH: So, thats what a quilting bee is?

WR: Yeah, and they wouldn't do it for another year or two.

CH: Um, hum.

AH: Alright, now, I got that straight. How about community canning?

CH: Everybody would come, like I wanted to can my food today, all of them come can mine.

WR: Well, they'd have . . .

CH: All of them go and can yours just the whole group.

AH: Did you ever do that here in Jackson, is what I want to know?

WR: Naw.

CH: Naw, naw.

AH: Never did that in Jackson? Did you have quilting bees here in Jackson.

CH: Naw, they'd do it at my hometown.

WR: Naw, no mam.

CH: Naw, ugh, uh. That was in the country where we lived. Simpson.

WR: And so, they'd come. They'd can peaches. They'd can pears. They'd can plums. They'd can

CH: Thats when you had a plantation.

WR: Well, it wasn't no plantation, we lived down there on a farm about a forty or fifty acre farm. They'd can black berries. They'd can black berries. They'd can dew berries. They'd can figs--and plums. I don't know whether you know what a plum is. They would can plums. Well, they'd be a group canned at your house today, next time the other lady would get all of hers together you'd go there and can hers. Maybe it was just a club that would go around and can.

AH: Thats interesting.

WR: Maybe they canned each one over a hundred gallons of each different

stuff, and you could can sweet potatoes.

CH: Just like killing hogs, your meat and stuff, a group of men would come do that at your house today, and that whole group--your husband and all--would go to the next man's house. The women would be frying out the fat.

AH: Did you ever do that in the city thou, around here? Downtown, is one thing; but I was thinking about the outskirts of Jackson, do you ever recall?

CH: Well, I never worked . . .

WR: The outskirts of Jackson, they use to kill hogs. They would have a place, you know, they would call it a smoke house, thats what they called it . . . a smoke house, just like a club house.

CH: Made out of logs.

WR: And they'd hang that meat up among them. They'd have something just like you barbeque, them things in there. They'd put . . .

CH: They'd smoke it.

WR: They'd put some kind of stuff on it . . . a little stuff and they'd let that meat hang and keep that smoke on it till it get dry. Just like you get a cured ham now. Well, thats the way it would be cured.

CH: It was out outskirts of Jackson and all through.

AH: Out where? Where?

WR: Simpson County, Magee, Mississippi.

CH: Simpson County, Rankin County, Hinds County and all.

WR: And Magee.

CH: Um, hum.

AH: Now, maybe we're back in the city now, do you ever recall any Street Peddlers?

WR: Oh, yes.

CH: Yeah, plenty of 'em. Toting it on their back and everything. Thats the most folks bought it from, peddlers. Come from different towns,

different cities, and have things like that. They'd sell if for little or nothing.

AH: I was just going to ask you if you remember ah, any of the peddlers singing songs?

CH: Naw, I don't remember. Naw . . . Yeah, they'd be hollering.

AH: What would they sang?

WR: They'd sang this old rhythm music, but I don't remember.

CH: I don't remember. But it was old rhythm music. Thats the way you'd know they were coming.

WR: It wasn't like the music now. And thats the way they began to get higher and higher and higher and higher. They called it hillbilly music and they would call it ah, rah

CH: Southern music.

WR: And ah, rah the colored people

CH: They'd called it jazz.

WR: Cause I heard one of them old songs years ago about Tallahatchie Bridge. You know who first started that song?

AH: Who?

WR: She was a colored lady, standing on the Tallahatchie Bridge.

AH: Um, hah. You talking about the song that "Billie Joe"

CH: Yeah.

WR: Yeah "Billie Joe," it was a colored that started that song. I went to Michigan in '39, she started that song before '39.

AH: Now Billie Joe gets the headlines. (Laughter)

CH: Yes, he do.

WR: I never will forget I remember how that colored lady lived, cause they'd bring her on every once in awhile. She's the one started that song.

AH: Yeah, now I wanted to ask you about ah, "good times" in your family?

CH: Well, it was just "good times" in our family. We didn't fight one another. We wasn't allowed to hit one another and call one another out of his name or nothing. We all . . . all of us just lived as a family.

WR: We'd have family reunions, you know, what they call now

CH: And we'd have family reunions, family pairs, and everything.

WR: We'd meet at the church.

CH: We'd have that with our family, the whole family. See, and we never did fuss. I never heard my mother say an awful word in my life. See, like that. We never heard that.

WR: Let people call us names

CH: And us childrens, here we would be down playing and we'd get us some pins you know, and ah, and hook them like hooks and call ourselves fishing on a Sunday. And snakes would get on them, and we quit it. We were scared. Mama told us it was the devil. In which it would be, God wouldn't allow children to do like it do now, doesn't look like.
(Laughing)

WR: You'd, you'd . . . put them pins

CH: Always something happened to us.

AH: You say a snake bit.

CH: A snake got on the pins just like an fish and sit there and look at you. We didn't know what it was, it could have been the devil.

WR: You put a piece of meat on it.

CH: Just being a straight pen, you know, pins were long then. You'd bend it up like a hook, you could catch fishes with them.

WR: They'd have a cork

CH: Big fishes!

WR: I don't know what they were made out of-that cork would sink them, and something would come along and snatch it. You could tell when something was on it, It would carry it under,

CH: And we got water out of the springs. But we never got it out of the

cisterns, springs and wells.

AH: Around here in Jackson?

CH: There was a spring here in Jackson. Where was that Willie?

WR: I don't know where that spring was.

CH: Somewhere here in Jackson, you could get water out of the spring somewhere here. I forgot just where its at.

WR: Well, I know ah, out here in

CH: Whether it was in Rankin County or Jackson.

WR: But I know ah, out here from Pine Hill--probably you know where that is-- I remember my grandmother my mother's mother by the way she would can beans. That water continue to run and she snapped those beans and moistened them and put that can under the like that big . . .

CH: Glass jars.

WR: And let it run full of water and she would screw that top on there and they never spoiled.

CH: And you see them beans would be running over. I never would help cook beans or canned it. Different things, they didn't cook . . . That where these here folks heard it from . . . the Negroes.

WR: I got a cousin ~~that~~ lives out there; I would like to go out there and see that spring. It run through something like stones and bricks. It just ran, and ran . . .

CH: And that water is just as cold as this . . . ice here.

WR: And clear as a crystal.

CH: And this clear water, all the water in Simpson County is clear, clean, earthly water. Thats between McGee, Mississippi and Mendenhall.

WR: And south from, Mendenhall.

CH: And its at McGee, some of its spring good water, good water spring.

WR: Naw, I'm talking about the spring my grandmother . . .

CH: Good water spring where they got water for the church there for that

- Methodist Church was good water springs. It was at the Church.
- WR: Well, this here was out . . .
- CH: There are springs mostly everywhere.
- WR: They mostly on a farm.
- CH: We had a spring on Les McCloud's place. See, we didn't have wells all the time. They didn't dig wells. They'd just have springs and you would have to go to that is running just as clear.
- WR: And I just wonder now, how did that water come up to the earth, and then they'd have water and they never would go dry.
- AH: (Laughter) Yeah, that is something.
- CH: Um, hum. (Laughter)
- AH: Now lets go back here to ah, this ah, music. Have you ever heard of "Hamboning"
- CH: Hambone music? Yeah, that was old-time music. Yeah, I heard of it, but you know, I don't know how it sound.
- AH: You don't know anything about "Hamboning"?
- CH: Because they could play a guitar and that would make our music be al-right. It was music, and they'd be havng a good time. We wouldn't know what to do. I don't know who played it but, I know we had different bands.
- AH: Yeah, now, describe church music. What kind of music did you have in your church?
- CH: In our church? We had an organ. It was an organ you played with the hand then, it wasn't this organ like it is now. And when the church was first started It was the old-timed organs. Organs what they had to play in their homes, in the church and everywhere.
- WR: But when the church . . .
- CH: Organ music.
- WR: When the churches first come out, they didn't have no organ.
- CH: Didn't have no organ,
- WR: They'd sang their hymns, old-timed hymns?

- WR: You know.
- CH: You hear them talk about old-timed hymns?
- AH: You hear them talk about timed hymns.
- AH: Um, hum. I jsut want to know what they were like?
- CH: Like "Jesus". . . , "The Lord Is My Sheppherd" and all like a that, you know. They'd sing it from the Bible. See, it come from the Bible.
- WR: It wasn't the first Testament . . . It would be these old Bibles.
- CH: "Amazing Grace" and all of that. Thats what we'd have.
- AH: Okay; could you sing a little bit of it for me?
- CH: Ah; naw. She could sing, I never . . .
- WR: I can't sing them songs.
- CH: I can't sing too good. "Amazing Grace, how sweet it sound." Thats about all I can sing.
- WR: And they had these old Bibles.
- CH: "Saved a wretch like me . . ." And they could sang it. And then we had choirs sang just with vocal you know, from just vocal, no music.
- WR: They song out of books, cause they had books for theirs.
- CH: They had choirs. They just had books.
- AH: Called "Shaped Notes".
- CH: Yeah, "Shape Notes". We didn't have no music. When they got the organs in there, I was big then, good size girl . . . see, we didn't have all this stuff when we were little. We just had the "Old Timed Religion, see.
- AH: Were the children taught this kind of singing, or did you just hear it and sing it?
- CH: Yes. The children could sing. They'd get on it and we'd get out in a place and us chillens would have church.
- WR: Oh, they'd sing from that size on up. (Motioning with her hands.)

- CH: Yeah, they could sing good as grown folks . . . chilluns. And you'd see everybody went to church--babies, old, chilluns, and all. If you weren't at church on a Sunday, you wouldn't be at home.
- WR: ~~When~~ children were growing up then, their parents would teach them this at home. And they'd teach them how to sing their blessing. They'd teach them how to pray.
- CH: You'd never sit down and eat without telling the Lord about it in your life. I do so now.
- WR: Your father, your mother, would sit down at the head of that table, and she would bless that food.
- CH: If your father, weren't there your mother would bless it.
- WR: You didn't pick up a fork until they had blessed that food and then they'd learn you how to say, "The Lord Is My Sheppherd" or a different verse sitting around the table.
- CH: And when, you were very little you eat with you fingers. But our parents whopped us and made us eat with a fork and a spoon.
- AH: Now, do you remember, ah, seeing banjo players on the streets, or seeing people playing music with bottles.
- WR: Yeah, they would play these old banjoes, bing, bing, bing, bing . . .
- CH: With bottles And ah, jugs blowing them and things like that.
- WR: And they'd have something made out of wood, and some of them would strike it with their hands. They called them African people.
- AH: Called them what? African people. Do you know why they called them African people?
- CH: Because they were dark.
- WR: Well, my grandmother said she ride on water six weeks coming to this country.
- AH: She did what now?
- WR: Ride on water six months or something coming to this country. Say they sold her and brought her here.
- CH: And she was seventeen years old.

- WR: And sold her sister and she went another way. They sold her mother and she went another way. They never heard from each other no more. And they was around a hundred years old when they died.
- CH: Mama was a hundred-thirty oldest one ever died in Mississippi.
- WR: My grandmother, my father of my father . . .
- AH: Oh, really.
- WR: And ah, rah my mothers grandmother. They were sold just like ah, rah maybe this one would come in and want you they'd buy you. I don't know what they'd pay for you. Another would come in and they'd want your other sister. They'd buy her, and the one that come in want the mother. Well, they went away. They never seen one another or never hear tell of 'em and don't know where they went or nothing.
- AH: But you remember your grandmother? Can you describe her for me?
- CH: She was a heavy set dark woman with good hair.
- WR: She was dark and her hair was about that long (demonstrating) but, it was curly, you know, curly--like.
- CH: You know, dark . . .
- WR: I'm talking about they were you know, talking about . . .
- CH: But they were pretty, pretty people.
- WR: You know, they were nice looking people, but they were black as your hair. And, and, and, mama's grandmothers hair was about that long (demonstrating) that it very long but, it was curly. Kinda, yeah, it was curly like. I can remember but my father's mother, I just can remember.
- CH: Now, my father's mother wasn't sent to this country. She was raised in this country. And she was black-brown skinned. And his father was a white woman's son.
- WR: I will tell you who bought my mother's mother, the Sillers bought my mother's mother. The Sillers who lived out their in ah, rah . . .
- CH: You now, the Sillers /Walter/ who was the governor up here that was my mama's first cousin. /There was to governor Sillers but Walter Sillers was Speaker of the House around 1946/ ,
- WR: Lived out there from Pine Hill, from Mendenhall. They bought my grand-

mother.

AH: When she first came here?

WR: Um, hum.

CH: Um, hum.

WR: They bought them over here.

AH: Have you ever thought about doing a family genealogist? That would be very interesting.

WR: Um, shu. And so, both of them were his wives.

CH: We respected them.

WR: My grandmother has a child by him one year and his wife has had one.

CH: They lived in the house here.

WR: There wasn't no arguments, no squibbing or nothing.

CH: Now her mama never did marry, because he didn't let her.

WR: And every one of my mother's brothers and sisters would come to see her when she was sick. Bring her money and bring her everything and call her Aunt Isabel. That was after we moved here.

CH: My daddy's mama was born in this country. And ah, a white woman had a son. Theys two brothers of 'em two white brothers and one of them white brothers married my grandmother. Ever way they married, they married. They lived together until they died, and he died in our house.

WR: You know, the way they say they married then, they'd jump over the broom backwards.

CH: And pappy--that was my daddy's daddy,-- he was white, married to a colored woman. He's the cause of we having some . . . had land, homes of our own.

WR: And thats the way they married. Now, I can hear my grandmother say.

CH: And his brother would make us call him uncle.

WR: They'd stand them up there, this man would stand them up there.

- CH: And his wife would make us call her Aunt. She was white.
- WR: And they'd stand them up there and make them hold each others hand and jump over that broom backwards.
- CH: It can be said I've been living pretty good all my life.
- WR: Thats what she said, and I have never heard tell of that in my life.
- CH: And I'd go home to a funeral now, we can go home to our funeral any of 'ems funeral and they'd be as many white folks there as they will colored. And like they'd have a wake in my hometown. The ah, white folks would be there just like the colored ones. Cousin so and so you know, I was there and I know I'd come up with a white girl in my hometown. We use to play together because a colored girl ah, white, one of my other cousins called me you're a nigger and she whopped her. And me and her got on her and whopped her. We beat her. Then her mama whopped her for calling me that. And she was at uncles wake, her and her mama, and her daughter. And she talked with me and his baby son you know, and said, "Ceolia I sure is glad to see you," hugged and kissed me just like I was her sister.
- Dep*