

JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

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

MRS. LIZZIE GARNER

Interviewed

by

Mr. Shawn Knox

on

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JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

ORAL HISTORY STUDY OF:
BLACK EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS
in
MISSISSIPPI

INTERVIEWER: Mr. Shawn Knox
INTERVIEWEE: Mrs. Lizzie Garner
SUBJECT: Jackson's History of "Good Ole Days"
DATE:

K: I am Shawn Knox and we're at the Smith Robinson Senior Citizens Site. I am interviewing Mrs. Lizzie V. Garner.

K: Mrs. Garner, when did you come to Jackson and how old were you when you came?

G: I've been in Jackson, since I was grown. I came to Jackson in 1940.

K: What was the City like when you got here?

G: It was almost a lot like it is now. People just grew to be smarter; they just do more things and they know more things and they have advantage of some more things. Time gets better as time goes on.

K: Did you go to school when you were here?

G: No.

K: How old were you when you came to Jackson?

G: Approximately fifty years. I am seventy-three, now. I've been here approximately thirty years.

K: What were some of the things you did here when you first came to Jackson? Night clubs?

G: I didn't go to any night clubs. I was always on the

G: Religious side. I went to church; that's all I knew. I was raised in a Christian home and we didn't know nothing about these night spots. My grandparents raised me.

K: What Church did you go to?

G: Cage Chapel; the one I belong to now.

K: How long have you been a member there?

G: Every since I've been here. Thirty years. We have an old Church, on the right of Ridgeway.

G: Do you know Rev. Horace Buckley? He's in the House of Representatives.

K: I've heard of him.

G: That's my pastor. Over on the right hand side, Rev. Hadgen was the pastor.

K: What are some of the jobs, that you've held?

G: Well they are shameful to tell; I hate to tell them; I am being interviewed because to tell the truth---- I hadn't had a job. I did work.

I tell so many people when they asked me where I worked well, "I didn't." Since I've been a grown woman, I had a good husband, 'a good old husband,' and he said this, "You stay at the house and keep things going, and I will keep things going outside the home", and we made it good like that. He had the outside work, I didn't have no outside job; right outside the home.

K: What were some of the good times you and your family enjoyed?

G: We didn't have any special enjoyment. Just being at home: Homelife with my husband and children?

My older daughter said this, "It makes me cry to think how many things you've missed in life,"

I didn't never know nothing and didn't do nothing, aside from Church auxillaries and things like that.

K: How many children do you have?

G: Well. . .I don't have any now. I have one stepdaughter now. But, I had one daughter (my own) and I had two step children. The daughter, that I birthed, she's dead. She died the same year my husband died. This was in 1963. I have two in Chicago.

K: Have you ever heard of Hamboing?

G: Yes. I've ^{seen} them dancing and making spectacles out of it.

K: What else do you be doing? Tapp dancing.

G: I've seen a little of it.

K: You don't know how to do it, do you?

G: No.

K: If you wanted to enjoy yourself during the "Good Ole Days" which would you prefer: the big bands, rag time blues?

G: Neither one. I don't know about those things. I hadn't had no experience with those things.

K: What about Church music?

G: I think it should be sacred. Nationally, I think it should be sacred; I just don't ---I guess I'm old-timed but thats what I think good sacred is.

K: Do you remember any of the old church songs you use to sang?

G: "Give me that Old Time Religion." I went for that,

K: What was downtown Jackson like when you came?

G: It was quiet.

K: Do you think it has expanded much?

G: It has expanded lots. Most of downtown Jackson have changed considerable.

K: In the 1940's did they have trolleys, or trolley cars?

G: Yes. I don't think I had moved here; they didn't have them when I moved here. I remember seeing them when I came here before I moved here.

K: They had busses then, right?

G: Yes.

K: Did you ever ride the busses?

G: Yes. Everybody going to the back end of the bus; be sure you were on the last seats and be sure you didn't sit with no white person.

K: That was in the 1940's?

G: Yes. You wouldn't dare sit down by a white...the seat could be empty; but you wouldn't dare sit by that white person. One white person to a seat, but you better not sit there.

K: They wouldn't let you sit there with the Whites?

G: Pitiful!

K: Times have changed quite a bit now.

G: Oh yes!

K: Do you recall the opening of

G: No. I didn't go to none of the Clinics then.

K: What kind of health hazards do you remember in the 1940's?

G: I really don't remember anything but the flu.

G: I wanted to go back too and say, something about my education. I finished high school. I was way back out in the rural. After, I came to Jackson Mississippi, I've had quite a bit of educational training well; religiously so. I've had a course in Religion under the philosophy under Dr. Dansby. It was an extended course. I lived way in the rural, but he said this, "They couldn't come up her, so we're taking the College down to them". We got books from Jackson College and some of the teachers were preachers and they would teach us. We had courses that equaled two years of college.

K: Did you finish both years of the study?

G: Yes.

K: Did you ever see Dr. Dansby? Was he the instructor?

G: Oh yes! He came down but he wasn't the teacher. He had appointed teachers. I went to Dr. Dansby's home. I knew him real well.

K: Did you have to pay very much for it?

G: No. We didn't have to pay much. I don't remember the exact fee, but it wasn't much.

- G: We got the books from the College. I don't know where they got their pay, but we didn't do much paying.
- K: Where were you living then?
- G: I was living way down south in Mississippi.
- K: Since I've been in Jackson, the Church and associations of Jackson sponsor school religious education, and I have taken all those courses, every year, once a year. We would get credit.
- K: Did you ever teach?
- G: I taught Church school ever so long. But, I taught in Quarterly meetings. I was very active in religious school. I've got a right smart of that; the most I got is religious training.
- K: Do you enjoy it?
- G: Yes.
- K: Can you remember any thing else about the black and white relationship?
- G: I remember vividly, I thought it was the worst thing. I didn't have no other alternative but to sit there, and drank it down. The incident happened on a bus. I remember once, my home was from Mississippi. I was going down to to visit with people and I was riding one of those Trailways busses from here. . .to NewHeavbern. A lady sit right down right in front of me.

G: A white lady was sitting over and a couple of Colored ladies got on and she sit down on the edge. But, it was plenty of room almost through the bus. The bus driver started on off; and he looked in the mirror and saw the Colored lady sitting there side the white lady. . .Harmless! The bus driver got up and left his seat and come back there. He said, "You get up from here".

But why? They wouldn't allow that. "Get up from here, don't you see this white woman sitting down here. She was trembling; and said Yes, Sir. She got up. He doubled up his fist like he was going to lay her out, just because she was sitting there, harmless. The white lady was talking with us; she was enjoying it. I just kept thinking about that; I couldn't forget it.

K: Have anything else happen like that?

G: Not happening where I was concerned.

K: Can you give me some of the good times you had in Church?

G: Back then, we thought singing and praying was the best time you could have. We got more joy out of singing and praying than any other thing you could have.

K: Did you ever sing in the Choir?

G: Yes, I have sung in the choir.

K: When you were in Church, did you all ever have picnics and campouts?

G: Yes, occassion Most times that was once a year, that we would have picnics and people would go to it.

K: Describe it for me.

G: They laughed and talked and told jokes. Eating was the biggest thing. We enjoyed eating and getting cold drinks because it wasn't so plentiful then.

K: What about the prices of food in the 1940's?

G: To tell the truth, we didn't much food. Back in the Good Ole Days, we made and grew our food. We didn't know anything about the prices of food, because we got so little.

K: You use to stay on a farm when you were young.

G: Yes, long years ago. I stayed on the farm until I came to Jackson in 1940; we were still on the farm.

K: What were the differences? Did you like the farm best or the City?

G: By 1940, I had got pretty well up in age and wasn't too much I could do. My daughter was in Chicago, and they would say "you and dad both too old and you all ain't doing nothing nothing on the farm, so you just better go to Jackson and buy you a home."

K: Do you remember anything about the opening of Hawkins Field?

G: No.

K: In the 1940's did you see any Street Peddlers?

G: Yes.

K: Can you give me an example of how they would sound to you?

G: Well, I wasn't so interesting in them; I just heard them in the streets, maybe. But, I was never enough interested to tell about them.

K: Is there anything that you might want to add to this interview, that I might have left out?

G: I can't think of nothing now.

K: Were there many Black doctors in the 1940's?

G: When I first came to Jackson it really wasn't now and then a doctor: a colored doctor. I think it was about '45, when I first knew a colored doctor.

At first, when they came out, the poor colored doctor didn't have a chance because we wouldn't feel like we had a doctor unless he was white. Later on, I had a colored doctor.

G: Do you know DAvid Britten?

G: He was the first colored doctor I had.

K: Do you recall anything about midwives?

G: I know when they use to come around; they were the doctors. They would come around with the baskets on their arms. The parents would tell we children they had a baby in the basket. Back then, we thought they were bringing babies; the people with the baskets.

K: What did they do?

G: They help people have babies. They were the doctor at the bedside.

K: Do you remember anything about the public parks?

G: No. I didn't visit the public parks.

K: What was your most popular sport?

G: I must say, my life was dull. Old people raised me (my grandparents) and we didn't have no sports. You would go to church and school and come back home and go in the field, however.

K: What about hayrides? Did you ever go on a hayride?

G: Oh, no! (Laughter)

K: Do you remember any tent shows?

G: Yes. I went to a few shows.

K: Can you describe some of the tent shows?

G: It would be different groups; they would have a lot of tale tales, that the people would like. They would do a lot of tricks.

K: Is there anything else you want to add?

G: No. My life wasn't too full.

K: Would you comment on Dr. Dansby again for me?

G: I lived down in the country. I was always a religious girl and worker. I was teaching Sunday School and always going to Sunday School. They chose me as one to further my education. . . Religious work. I don't know who started it, but they had it arranged so that the teachers. . . the best teachers would get some more education.

G: I think the pastor brought in this idea. He contacted Dansby, Jackson College where we were to further our education; and we did.

I remember he came down to the pastor and the leading people of the Church; the ones that wanted to go to school to further their education. President Dansby said, "he would come down." He would come down sometime and he would always send people, like the pastor and preachers to teach us. We were taking that training under President Dansby.

We had religious books and we had a course in English and History.

K: Did you all go to the Campus?

G: No.

K: They came to you.

G: Yes.

G: When you get through with the tape, what are you going to do with it? What's going to happen to it?

K: We are going to put it on record.

G: Will I hear any more of it?

K: Yes, you can hear it anytime you want too. Do you want me to play it over when we get through, so you can see what you sound like?

G: Yes. (Laughter)

K: Is there anything else you want to say about Dr. Dansby?

G: It started through the minister, our pastor. He told us what we were supposed to do and he contacted the College for us.

G: We got our literature and started studying.
We studied for two years, an extended course and we finished this course. It was a religious course. We had English and History and a bible course. When we finished the two year course, President Dansby brought a preacher from Jackson, Rev. and we had a commencement exercise down in the country just we few who was taking this course.

K: Do you remember how the campus looked like then?

G: I saw it but, I wasn't around enough to become familiar with it.

K: I really appreciate your cooperation.

G: It was nice to have met you. I bet you don't remember my name.

I was a Foot by birth. Lizzie Foot. (Laughter)

K: Mrs. Garner, I want to thank you again.

G: Thank you for having me!

END OF INTERVIEW

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF INTERVIEWEE

Mrs. Lizzie V. Foote Garner was born in Rankin County, Mississippi in 1903. She was reared by her grandfather and her aunts all of whom lived and worked on her grandfather's farm. After the death of her grandfather, Mrs. Garner went to live with her mother and step-father in D'Lo, Mississippi until she was first married. Mrs. Garner had one daughter which she lost. She finished the eight grade. Mrs. Garner has never held a job outside of the home.

SUMMARY

Mrs. Lizzie Garner's ideas about the "Good Old Days" of her childhood center around fun and frolic at school and church. Having grown up in the rural, Mrs. Garner and the people around her seem to have created a kind of enjoyment of each others company due to the absence of any other outlet. They placed games as children as well as adults to this end.

GARNER, LIZZIE

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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, Lizzie V. Garner 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.

Lizzie V. Garner
Interviewee (Signature)

9/28/76
Date