

Uncorrected Transcript of
Interview
with
ETHEL THORPE ALSTON and FLOYD ALSTON, JR.
29 NOVEMBER 1995

by James Eddie McCoy, Jr.

Transcribed by Wesley S. White

The Southern Oral History Program
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Original transcription on deposit at
The Southern Historical Collection
Louis Round Wilson Library

Citation of this interview should be as follows:
"Southern Oral History Program
in the Southern Historical Collection,
Manuscripts Department, Wilson Library,
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill"

Copyright © 1998 The University of North Carolina

[START SIDE A]

**ETHEL THORPE ALSTON and FLOYD ALSTON, JR.
29 NOVEMBER 1995**

JAMES EDDIE McCOY: The date is November the 29th, 1995. I'm visiting with Mr. Floyd Alston, Jr. His mother Mrs. Ethel Thorpe Alston. The address is 201 First Street. Mr. Floyd Alston's birthday is 6-15-1933. Age sixty two. Mrs. Ethel Thorpe Alston's birthday is April 29th, 1916. Mrs. Austin, what area that you grew up in?

ETA: Well, uh, we were raised up most around in the county.

EM: But when you was a kid, you came up in Tar River Station?

ETA: No, that's when.....?????? Uh, two years, or three years, you know people you used to farm one year and move to another farm.

EM: Were your parents sharecroppers?

ETA: Uh-huh.

EM: What was your daddy's name?

ETA: Ather Thorpe

EM: What?

ETA: Ather.

EM: Ather.

ETA: Ather Thorpe.

EM: Ather Thorpe. Where did he come from?

ETA: He must have come back??????????????????

EM: What about your mother's name, what was her name?

ETA: Pearl Thorpe

EM: What was her name before she was a Thorpe.

11/29/95

ETA: She married a Thorpe, she was a????? before she married.

EM: Okay, so she was Pearl?????? Okay. Uh, Mr. Alston, uh, what street, where was you born at in Oxford?

FA: Born on East street.

EM: How many years you think y'all stayed over there?

ETA: Stayed I don't know how long.

FA:????? I know he's still there, part time stays with his grandmother.....???????

EM: Your grandmother stayed???????

FA: Old well place, on Granville Street. Used to be 204 Granville Street.

EM: Okay, 204 Granville Street. This was grandmother?

FA: Yeah.

EM: That was just you, no more of your brothers and sisters stayed with her?

FA: Well, the next,?????????? his name is, I call him, his name is.....????

EM: Harry Lee Alston? Uh, how many brothers and sisters do you have?

FA: Three besides me, two sisters....

EM: Okay, name them all. Name all your sisters and brothers.

FA: Harry Lee Alston, a brother named Harvey James Alston, and a brother passed away is Boise McKinley Alston, and a sister passed away, I can't quite know her name, Mary, Mary Spencer Alston. And I had a sister named Brenda Alston. Those were my brothers and sisters.

EM: Who went the farthest in school than your.....

FA: Well, I went to the, I think, I went to the ninth grade, I don't know exactly how far my brother Pete went next to me. I went to the ninth grade.

EM: You went to Mary Potter?

FA: Mary Potter, Yeah.

11/29/95

EM: What did you do after you, what did you do?

FA: Well, after that, I joined the air force, I mean, they was drafting for the army, but me and some more boys from Oxford, we went over to Raleigh, and I tried for the air force, although I didn't have a high school education, but, my IQ was high enough, I passed and so I joined the air force four years.

EM: That was during the Korean....

FA: The Korea, the Korea conflict.

EM: And you went to, you passed the test?

FA: Air force, four years, oh yeah, I passed it.

EM: And then what you do? Finish school in the air force or?

FA: No, I didn't to school, but I just took a, you know what the call a on the job training, on the job training, I took different things like that, and uh, but I didn't never go to school no more after that. I just, just got self learning, I mean.

EM: And when you came out, did you use your G.I. Bill, or you take a???? or what happened?

FA: Well, when I came out, I got into, started doing factory work, and so I start from there doing factory work, and that's been ever since, you know, doing factory work.

EM: Mrs. Alston, uh, can you name your father's brothers and sisters?

ETA: I don't think he had any brothers, he had one named Steven, uh, Steven....

EM: That's a boy?

ETA: Boy. And had one named Henry Thorpe. That's all the brothers I know that daddy....

EM: And what's his name? Your father's name?

ETA: Ather.

EM: So it's three boys?

ETA: Uh-huh.

11/29/95

EM: Now, how many girls was they?

ETA: Uh, had one that named Lucy Thorpe, that's all I know, Lucy Thorpe. I don't know no more.

EM: Okay, so it was just your mother and her sister? Okay, where did they come from?

ETA: Who?

EM: Your mother, where was she raised up at?

ETA: She was raised?????, my mother. My dad, used to call it.....????? grandpapa used to be a horse, uh used to shoe horses....

EM: Who?

ETA: My grandpapa used to shoe horses up there, and they named that????? shop, because he shoed horses.

EM: What was your grandfather's name?

ETA: Uh, Harry **Saddlewhite**????

EM: And that's what he used to do?

ETA: Uh-huh.

EM: Did he know anything about slavery?

ETA: Well, I reckon he could tell you about it, It had been back, I think slavery time been back to my momma's momma.

EM: Did you know your mother's mother?

ETA: No, she died.

EM: Did your mother ever tell you anything about slavery?

ETA: Well, I used to hear old folks talking about it, when people pray, they had to get out, couldn't let folks then pray...

EM: Did any of them tell you they went to church with the white people?

ETA: Huh-uh, I ain't heard that.

11/29/95

EM: Huh?

ETA: No, I didn't heard that.

EM: Uh, where were you living at when you got married?

ETA: On Lee St.

EM: You was living on Lee St. when you got married?

ETA: Yeah.

EM: Did y'all have a mid-wife in y'all, did you know who was the mid-wife??????

ETA: I don't know who was,???????

EM: Who?

ETA: I don't know. Ret Downey.

EM: Ret Downey?

ETA: She our cousin.

EM: She was a mid-wife?

ETA: Yes, she was one.

EM: What relation are you to Mrs. Ret Downey?

ETA: Cousin.

EM: How? On who's side, you mother or your father?

ETA: I think that was on my mother's side.

EM: The Downeys?

ETA: Uh-huh.

EM: Who are you related to in Oxford?

ETA: The???????, we are cousins.

EM:????? who?

11/29/95

ETA:?????

EM: Uh-huh, she's your first cousin?

ETA: My first cousin.

EM: Can you name somebody else that's your cousin?

ETA: Who else here? I know it's some others, I forgot, I just can't name them.

EM: How far did you go in school?

ETA: I didn't go far, 'cause I couldn't go.

EM: Why?

ETA: I had to stay at home and do the work, while momma worked.

EM: Where was you mother working at?

ETA: Cooking. For white folks.

EM: What school did you go to when you was a kid?

ETA:??????? school.

EM: It burned down, or you went before it burned down?

ETA: No, it hadn't burned down yet.

EM: Okay, will you give me your whole name, and the year and the date you was born?
What's your name, you whole.....

ETA: Ethel T. Alston.

EM: And what month was you born?

ETA: Uh, April 29th.

EM: What year?

ETA: April, April 29th

EM: 19 what?

11/29/95

ETA: 1916.

EM: And uh, you didn't go to school....

ETA: huh-uh, I went to the fourth grade.

EM: Did you have other sisters and brothers that you had to help take care of?

ETA: Yeah, I had a sister and brother.

EM: You was the oldest?

ETA: I was the oldest then, my oldest sister died. I was the next oldest.

EM: So, uh, who was, what kind of work did your father do?

ETA: Well, he used to work uh, on construction jobs and things, sometimes when they work, my daddy?????? and coat a whole lot. He didn't kept enough of work.

EM: You are being honest. Uh, so, you know, you go through a whole lot when you are a kid, and when y'all came along, uh, y'all was a very strong people, and taking that, and the family had to be a been very strong too. To stick together, to go through what, go through it, 'cause y'all, you know you didn't have no choice. You didn't have the opportunity that we have now, that you could work, there wouldn't no welfare or nothing like that. So y'all just had to stop school and do the best you could.

ETA: That's right. That's right.

EM: You had to do what you had to do.

ETA: That's right.

EM: And uh, I can understand that. Somebody had to make the sacrifice.

ETA: That's right.

EM: So, you made it. Uh, what's your father, who, who, name some of your father's people.

ETA: Mary Allen, uh, Henry?????? was his brother.

EM: Where did he live?

ETA: He stayed up on St. Mathis.....????????

11/29/95

EM: Uh-huh, he stayed up in the northern part?

ETA: Uh-huh.

EM: And who else? Who else was the relatives? Are y'all related to all the Thorpes up in that area?

ETA: Well, uh, Matt Thorpe and all of them. You know Matt Thorpe?

EM: I heard of him.

ETA: Well, we was kin to all of them people up there.

EM: What about the Mays?

ETA: We could have been kin to them, I don't know.

EM: What other Alstons were you related to?

ETA: I don't, Alston, yes. I don't basically know but about my husband's people.

EM: What was their name?

ETA: Some folks live in Henderson,??????? I wouldn't know now, I think I met them twice. But I don't know, I didn't know them.

EM: What about in Oxford?

ETA: I don't think there's any down here,????????? Oh, well, he had, I'm a Thorpe, I meant Alston, uh, that's all.

EM: Okay, Mr. Alston, you uh, name the rest of them your mother couldn't name.

FA: Well, uh, my daddy's brother was uh, you want his brothers?

EM: Uh-huh.

FA: He had a brother named Ishman Alston, one named Robert Alston, one named Edmund Alston, and.....

EM: That's four boys.

FA: There's one more. **Lenny???? Leonard Alston???** That's all that I know of.

11/29/95

EM: What about the sisters?

FA: Uh, Louise Alston, and Lucille Alston. That's two that's all, two girls.

EM: Uh, did you ever see any of your father's brothers and sisters?

FA: I saw all of them.

EM: Which one that went to, did you know which one that they say went to Foreson School?

FA: I would say Louise Alston. I would say.

EM: How far you think Louise went?

FA: I don't know, aunt Louise was pretty well educated, I mean, I don't know exactly how far she went in school.

EM: Did they all live in town too?

FA: Yeah, they all live in town, the used to farm off and on, yeah.

EM: Did share cropping come from your mothers' side or from your father's side?

FA: Both. Both sides.

EM: Both sides.

FA: But my daddy, my father was born in New York, Buffalo, New York. Brooklyn, New York, excuse me, Brooklyn, New York. He was born, my father was born in Brooklyn, New York.

EM: Well, he moved down here with his family or what?

FA: Must, must moved down with his father and them I reckon, but he was born in Brooklyn, New York.

EM: And uh, what church was your father.....

FA: Same church as y'all are. Refuge Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

EM: The one that you a member

FA: Member of, yes. Same church.

11/29/95

EM: So, your father family grew up in that church?

FA: That's right.

EM: And you came up in the same, with your father's side?

FA: That's right.

EM: Who went with your mother side to church?

FA; Well, uh, it was my grandmother, she went to the same church.

EM: What was your grandmother's name?

FA: Uh, Mrs. Pearl Thorpe.

EM: Uh-huh.

FA: And uh, my grandfather, Mr. Athel Thorpe, he belonged to the same church.

EM: That was the Episcopal?

FA: No, uh, Refuge Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ, but it wasn't called that then, but uh anyway, the same I belongs to now. And they was come up in that, 'cause grandmother, she used to teach me all about the Bible and Sunday school when I was small, just a little kid. So, uh, I came up in the church, we, all my brothers and all, we came up in that church. You know the brothers that we have now....

EM: And uh, did your mother's father came, your father came up in there, and your mother came up in there. She's a member of your, that church now?

FA: Same church now.

EM: She was what, a Episcopalian first?

FA: She said, uh-huh.

EM: You was Episcopalian? 'Cause all the Roysters was in that area.

ETA: Yeah.

EM: Was Episcopalian.

ETA: Yeah.

11/29/95

EM: Uh, you never farmed, though?

FA: Oh, Yeah, I used to get out of school and drive two horse mules,?????????

EM: Where were you living at then?

FA: Over here other side of Tar River like you going, other side of Bell Town. Up by Tar River.

EM: Was it near Summer Grove Church?

FA: Like you going to Stems. Short ways from Stems. 'Bout four or five miles from Bell Town.

EM: Oh, okay, were you on, went home on the Bell Town Rd. Or on.....

FA: On the Bell Town Road, Yeah.

EM: Okay, okay so you came from out there in that area?

FA: Well, we farmed out there, my father farmed in different places here, Granville County.

EM: Oh, he was a sharecropper? He moved around?

FA: That's right.

EM: Where was, do you know the name of the farm that when you was working that white man....

FA: We was working for Mr. Davis, Luther Davis. He passed away, Mr. Luther Davis, and Mr. Jimmy Balou, they own the farm together. Mr. Luther Davis, and Mr. Jimmy Balou.

EM: Now, let's get it straight now, the Balou plantation farm is when you cross the Tar River bridge?

FA: That's right.

EM: On the right hand side?

FA: That's it, right there where the farm was.

EM: Okay. Now, I'm going to take you back, did you ever see the mill on one side, did you know it was a corn mill on the left hand side, and one of the right hand side?

11/29/95

FA: Well, it's one there now, but...

EM: It rot down.

FA: But it wasn't there when I was out there, that come later. That came later.

EM: Which one of them?

FA: Well, both of them, 'cause there wasn't nothing there then. But fields that we plowed in.

EM: And wasn't no mill...

FA: Wasn't no mill there...

EM: On each one of them?

FA: No, 'cause it was right up form Tar River you talking about?

EM: Yeah.

FA: There was nothing there.

EM: Okay there was a bridge, it was a bridge...

FA: Bridge right down there.

EM: Yeah, but it was two mills, two corn mills, one was on each side of that plantation.

FA: No, that's later, they built that later. Way later.

ETA: Wasn't nothing there.

FA: Wasn't nothing there but corn fields. We used to have a field there we plowed.

ETA: There, right up on the hill there after you cross the bridge.

EM: Right up on the hill, on the right hand side?

FA: Right hand side, uh-huh.

EM: Okay, now, it was a graveyard on that farm?

11/29/95

FA: I kind of remember, but it was so far back, it was a graveyard, I can't remember exactly where it was.

EM: Okay, now she's right. Mrs. Belou is buried at the pack house.

FA: Well, I know it's one out there.

EM: Mrs. Belou is buried on the right hand side. I been there, tall steep tomb stones, somebody knocked it off. And it going to take a wreck truck to put it back up. Now, the slave graveyard is on the left hand side, facing that, that barn. Now, did you know that, that it was a graveyard on that...

ETA: No, I didn't know it was a graveyard, I just thought they buried that person at the pack house there. 'Cause you see a tombstone.

EM: Right. Did you know Mrs. Belou was buried out there?

ETA: I didn't know.

EM: I know y'all had left from out there, but you didn't know she was buried out there?

ETA: No.

EM: Yeah, she was buried out there, and it tells you about her husband and everything. But he wasn't buried, he was a preacher I think. And so, the slave graveyard is on the left hand side of that, that's what the part you seen. Now, did you know Mrs. Belou? That you was farming with, did you know her?

ETA: No.....

FA: I knew him, but I didn't know her.

ETA: The one that live around here.

FA: The farm is right here...

EM: Yeah, I know what you talking about.

ETA: I used to cook for her.

EM: You did?

ETA: Uh-huh.

EM: How many years did you think y'all stayed out there?

11/29/95

ETA: One year..

FA: I'd say one year, Yeah.

EM: Okay, did you go to school at Providence?

FA: Right there where the Rev. Clint's church is. I walked to school.

EM: Did you walk through the, cross the pond?

FA: Sometimes I go around, cross the bridge, and sometimes I walk through.

EM: The shortcut?

FA: The shortcut.

EM: With peace?

FA: That's right.

EM: I know a lot about that area don't I?

FA: Oh, yeah.

EM: Yeah, 'cause I know he told, I was told if you didn't watch you would fall in that, you would fall on those rocks...

FA: 'Cause we used to walk across them rocks.

EM: Okay, now where did you move to after that?

FA: Right up, yeah, Avery farm...

ETA: Right across the bridge...up the road..

EM: Okay, Mr. Tom Harris, was it on that side?

FA: As you leave uh, from the uh, Davis farm, it was on the right side.

EM: Coming to Oxford?

FA: Coming to Oxford, yes.

11/29/95

EM: Okay, that's the same, that's the one that I think Mr. Thorpe, uh, what you call it's on now.

FA: I can't remember his name, he owned the farm.

EM: Okay, why did y'all leave Mr. Belou to come over to there?

ETA: We moved 'cause we didn't never stay at one farm but a year, sometimes we stay two years. But we never stayed no longer than that.

EM: Your father?

ETA: We moved somewhere else.

EM: Because he just wasn't interested in doing a whole lot of work?

ETA: Uh, I reckon so.

EM: I mean your husband.

ETA: Oh, my husband worked.

FA: I'll tell you the reason I think, mom, 'cause I know my father moved from, after he moved from the Avery farm, he stayed there a year, then he moved across over here to the Lewises'. You know where the Lewises?

EM: Uh-huh.

FA: Uh, what's the name of that man there? I know a??????? used to live on that farm there, let me see, John??????? used to live on that farm.

EM: Was it Gregory's farm?

FA: No.

EM: Was it the uh, I tell you who it was. Beasley?

FA: No, I can't think of his name.

EM: Okay....

FA: It was on that side, it was before you get down to the river, it was a branch, a branch right down that hill. It's, his farm was on that side like you....

EM: Railroad track..

11/29/95

FA: Yeah.

EM: Okay, how many years did y'all stay out there?

FA: I think we stayed out there one year or two, I mean that's when I started uh, the first year they opened uh, Snowball high school, 'cause I went that first year to Snowball high school, out there at uh, Snowball.

EM: On the bus?

FA: On the bus, the first year they opened that.

EM: The bus, when you stayed at uh, Providence, when you stayed out at Bell Town Road, did you walk to school, or was it buses then?

FA: Well, out there at Bell Town, out there, when we went to uh, the church, you know where Rev. Clint's church is. I mean, went to school there, well, we walked, but after we moved to Avery farm, we rode the bus.

EM: Avery or?

FA: Avery, yeah. Avery farm, yeah, we rode the bus.

EM: That's Avery?

FA: Avery, yes.

EM: Okay, you started the Belou's that was one? You went to Belou to Avery?

FA: Right.

EM: Okay, now, from there to Lewis?

FA: Lewises, right.

EM: Who did you farm with at Lewises', you don't remember?

FA: Don't remember the name, no.

EM: Okay, that's the, that's the third time, about how many years did you stay there?

FA: I think that's one year, see, 'because see the reason, my father, I know he saved up enough money, this land here, where we live now, well, I think it was one or two houses over there then, May Sanford, and Freddie Lewis's, 'cause that house right there, Yeah,

11/29/95

Mr. Cruise house, 'bout three houses out there, anyway, my daddy bought all this land right in here, all the way up to that, to the next street up there.

EM: You kidding.

FA: He had all that land, 'cause he sold all of that back after, you know, lot by lot. But he bought all this here, wasn't nothing on it but that one house there. And he was, I think it was uh, Mr. Davis, you know the one he farmed with, helped him get this land.

EM: That was nice.

FA: Yeah, helped him get this land. And so, uh, after that, he went and bought a barracks, they had a army camp over here in?????? he bought a barrack from????? and you hall that, me and my father, my grandfather, and my grandfather from my mother's side, we all, and my daddy's brothers all chipped in together and tore the place down.

EM: Disassembled that barn?

FA: That's right, disassembled that barracks, on a horse, mule and wagon, and halled it all here, right here is where he built his first house, and he had this house built. Mr. Joe Wiggerson, and all them helped got that house together, they built that house, and my father and them built that together. It was our cousin.

EM: And y'all took the same barracks....

FA: Same barracks...

EM: And reassembled again...

FA: reassembled again...

EM: Like it was.

FA: That's right.

EM: And what relation Mr. Joe Wiggerson....

FA: He on my daddy...

ETA: He was our cousin.

EM: Mr. Joe Wiggerson was?

ETA: Yeah, he was.

EM: Well, who was Matt Jones married to?

ETA: He married my older sister.

EM: What's your older sister name?

ETA: Cora Bell.

EM: Cora Bell.

ETA: Uh-huh.

EM: And she, she married...

ETA: Matt Jones.

EM: And she was Cora Bell Jones?

ETA: Right.

EM: How many children did she have by Matt Jones?

ETA: One, she had one.

EM: What was the name? What was the first one name?

ETA: Uh,??????

EM:????? Jones, that's And what was the other girls name that died that passed.....??????

ETA: They never named her 'cause she, she died when she was, something wrong with her kidney. And she died in the.....

EM: Did you know Matt Jones before he married your sister?

ETA: No, we didn't know him before he married her, but when he was grown.....

EM: You knew him then, that's what I mean, where was he living at?

ETA: I don't know where Matt Jones was living, when he married my sister.

EM: What kind of work did he do when he married...

11/29/95

ETA: I know who he stayed with...

EM: Who did he stay...

ETA: He stayed with somebody over here, I don't know.

EM: Did he ever tell you who his mother and father was?

ETA: Let me see, I don't know, I really never known Matt Jones folks.

EM: Did he ever tell you his daddy was white or his mother was white?

ETA: Uh-huh, he didn't tell us that, we didn't know that.

EM: Huh?

ETA: We didn't know that, but we just say he might have been come from a white man.

EM: Couldn't you look at him and tell?

ETA: Yes.

EM: Didn't he have all the features of a white person?

ETA: Uh-huh.

EM: He didn't tell your sister that his parents was white?

ETA: I don't reckon, I don't what he told my sister, I declare, I don't know.

EM: How old is, 'bout how old is his daughter that lives up north?

ETA: He gone, got children.

EM: So, uh, Matt Jones got married again after your sister died?

ETA: Uh-huh, he uh, married Lucy Well..

EM: Did she have any children?

ETA: I think Lucy got all?????? I think she got them all. By Matt I think.

EM: She had one child?

ETA: Uh-huh.

11/29/95

EM: When Matt married her?

ETA: Yeah, had one look like a white girl, butI don't know whether she was white or what.

EM: Mr. Alston, you tell me about uh, your father, he never farmed no more after that?

FA: No, he uh...

EM: What kind of work did he start to do?

FA: He went into tobacco you know,????? tobacco company. He did construction work too.

EM: That's what I'm saying, he still built houses and stuff like that. With Joe Wilkinson?

FA: With Joe Wilkinson, yes, he's a carpenter you know, but he put the house together, he could build a house with Joe Wilkinson.

EM: And who, your father, who else worked with them?

FA: Well, uh, I don't know exactly,??????? different people.

EM: And they run around town building houses and working in the factory.

FA: Well, my daddy, he was working in the factory, he used to, when he do it then, construction work, he used to, it's kind of hard to do, just like when you laying pipes, the way you put them together and jam them together and this and that, he always did that kind of, you know, didn't do too much digging, but he always did the work you know placing them together and whatever it took to do that. Building bridges.

EM: 'Cause he could read rules and, and stuff.

FA: Yeah, he could do anything.

EM: Yeah, yeah. Did he ever tell you how far he went in school?

FA: He didn't go too far in school, my father didn't.

EM: He didn't ?

FA: No, he didn't go too far in school, either.

11/29/95

EM: Mrs. Alston, how far did your husband go in school?

ETA: I don't know how far he went...

EM: Where was he born at?

FA: In New York.

ETA: He was born in New York.

EM: Did he tell you, who did he live with down here?

ETA: Uh, he roomed with somebody, I can't tell you who it was. I forgot, I done forgot who he was rooming with. He was rooming with somebody when I met him. He joined the same church that I belonged to. So.....???? But, I don't know where he was staying at,???????

EM: How did you get, how did your father, how, were you up in Sally White, did your granddaddy, did you go back and forth to visit him?

ETA: No, we didn't go back up there????????? children come along then when we learned that he was our grandfather. He had a home on down on east street. He had bought a house out on East Street.

EM: Did he, did he have other grandchildren, other than you, you r mother's?

ETA: Well, yes he did, but....

EM: Do you know any Roysters up in Sally White that you are related to now?

ETA:?????? Well, Yeah, we was kin to them.

EM: And what about Mrs. Ida Alston, how was you related to her?

ETA: I was, that was on my daddy's side, that was uh,

FA: Ida was a Mays.

EM: How did the Mays come into your families?

FA: Well, Ida Alston, I think Tina Mays and all them's kin to them.

EM: Yeah. Okay, Herman Mays...

FA: Yeah.

11/29/95

EM: Okay. They came, the Mays and the Alstons

FA: By marriage she was married by my uncle, my daddy's brother married you know...

EM: Into the Mays family?

FA: Into the Mays family, that's right.

EM: Okay, so that's how the Mays come into....

FA: Came into it, Yeah.

EM: So, you are related to the Mays?

FA: Mays...

EM: And the, help me out, the Thorpes

FA: The Thorpes, the Brandons.

EM: Tell me about the Brandons

FA: That's my grandfather's wife was a Brandon, on my daddy's side.

EM: Where the Brandons....

ETA: They come from Fairport.

EM: Okay, now, now I can tell you where the carpentry come from, the skills come from your father. Okay, all Brandon's was carpenters, they were master carpenters, they did all kind of construction work, so, so your father's mother was a Brandon?

FA: That's right. My father, that's right, my father's mother was a Brandon, Yeah, uh-huh, 'cause his daddy, I mean, my granddaddy Lee Alston married a Brandon, that's right, married into the Brandons. I know uh?????? Brandon, you ever know????? Brandon?

EM: No.

FA: They's some Brandon's here.

EM: Just name them.

11/29/95

FA: James Brandon that's in the family, I can't call of them by name.

EM: Now Sammy Robertson's mother was a Brandon.

FA: The Braswells.....

EM: Yeah...

FA: They in that...

EM: Yeah, all the Braswells...

FA: They say the Parkers is in the family.

EM: That's right. Nick Parker and all that, yeah, yeah, they are. Uh, they married a Brandon, uh, married into the Brandons. So, the Brandons they never worked, they weren't in slavery, they always worked for themselves. So, your mother, your father's mother was a Brandon?

FA: That's right.

EM: She married a Brandon or she was born a Brandon?

FA: She was born a Brandon.

EM: Okay, she was a Brandon...okay. So, you come from a big family?

FA: It's a big family, Yeah, we spread...

EM: Yeah, all over the county. The Brandons, the Braswells, the Hicks is in there. The Robinsons, 'cause Mr. Robinson married a Brandon, his wife was a Brandon. The Wortham's come in there. And then the Roysters, y'all touch a whole lot of people in this county.

FA: And Mr.?????? Parker, they was??????

EM: Yeah, uh-huh. And Dewey Parker and them. Did you know Dewey Parker? Live out one shinn Road going to George Write?

ETA: No.

EM: Okay, they were too.

ETA: I????????????

11/29/95

EM: Are you related to Mrs. Maggie???????

FA: Not that I know of.

EM: And your father bought all of this land over here, and sold lots off?

FA: All of the, right there where Maggie Lewis got up, built, all of that was my daddy's land, right there where she got her house, he sold it to her, right here where this man got his house here, and where Catherine house, he sold that to him.

EM: He smart weren't he?

FA: He, he used his head when he done all that. I mean, he was looking out for his family. He was looking at, see, when you go through so much like share-cropping, just like when I was in school, high school, I was smart, the teacher told me I was smart and everything, but point is, when I got to high school, but my daddy could do the best he could and everything, but when I went to school with????? pants on, uh,???? old shoes, I was ashamed. I start laying out, ducking school. And that's the reason I didn't, 'cause I wanted to go to college and everything. But you see, after all that you know, back then times was hard. Times was really hard, but he brought us through it all, you know. Brought it through it all.

EM: Them people was strong weren't they?

FA: Yeah, they had to be strong. Had to be strong, the people now couldn't make it.

EM: Oh no.

FA: Couldn't make it, they had to be strong.

EM: A guy told me, said white people had to come through what black people had to do back then, they'd be committing suicide.

FA: That's right, they'd been killing themselves, that's right.

EM: Where did they get strength from, you a church man?

FA: I'll tell you what, we come from a church family. 'Cause we got preachers on our side, preachers, see my grandmother, Pearl Thorpe, my momma's momma, she was really what you call a religious woman. When I was like that, she would bring me out of the street, playing in the street,?????? don't care what we had on, call us in church. She taught me all about the Bible. And the same verses when I was a kid, 'bout John 3:16 and the 23rd psalm and all like that, came all the way up in me, all the way up 'til my grown adult age. And, right now, after I got saved, I can think back on where them people's strength came from.