

Uncorrected Transcript of

Interview

with

DOROTHY ROYSTER BURWELL

29 MAY 1996

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 OF SIDE A]

DOROTHY ROYSTER BURWELL
29 May 1996

JAMES EDDIE McCOY: Today's date is (TAPE SKIPS).....in what we call Sudan, Virginia(TAPE CUTS OFF, AND BACK ON).....I'm James Eddie McCoy. I'm visiting with Mrs. Dorothy Royster Burwell. 9629 Lake Road, Bullock, North Carolina. She lives on the Lake Road, but we call in Sudan Virginia, because she's on the border of North Carolina-Virginia line. And we going to be talking about, Cedar Grove church, and Cedar Grove school. Mrs. Burwell, will you give me your full name?

DOROTHY BURWELL: Dorothy Royster Burwell.

EM: Your address?

DB: 9629 Lake Rd.

EM: The month and date you was born?

DB: 12-1-31.

EM: Your present age.

DB: Sixty four.

EM: And today's date.

DB: May the 29th, 1996.

EM: Uh, what area of Granville County did you grow up in when you was a kid? With your mother and father?

DB: Well, I was raised in Sudan, Virginia. Mecklenburg County. And after graduating from West End high school, I moved to Granville County, North Carolina.

EM: West End high school, it's over in the Sudan area?

DB: No, that's in Clarksville.

EM: Okay, and then, your parents moved over here, or, was they born over here?

DB: Well, they was born in Granville County, but they lived, you know, moved from Granville County to Mecklenburg County.

EM: Let's take your father first. Where did he come from?

5/29/96

DB: Uh, he was born in Granville County.

EM: What part, what area?

DB: Oh, around Bullocks area.

EM: What was his name?

DB: James B. Royster, Sr.

EM: Uh, was he related to Mr. Doc Royster?

DB: Yes, distant relatives.

EM: Uh, did he have brothers and sisters?

DB: Yes.

EM: Where they all born in Bullock?

DB: Uh, yes, they all was born in Granville County.

EM: What about his mother and father?

DB: Well, his father, he was born in Granville County also.

EM: What was his father's name?

DB: Charlie Royster.

EM: Uh, what was his fathers' name?

DB: His father's name was Willie Royster.

EM: Uh, did they, was they share-cropping or what? Was his father a sharecropper?

DB: He was uh, share-cropping, yes.

EM: Did he live on somebody's farm?

DB: Well, yes. He live on, I guess relatives or...

EM: Oh, his family. Always had land?

5/29/96

DB: Uh huh, yea.

EM: Okay, what church did he come up in?

DB: Uh, I think, I don't know, really what church, remember, 'cause don't any of his grandkids remember him, he, except the oldest ones....

EM: You never seen him?

DB: Never seen him.

EM: Okay, how many brothers and sisters did he have?

DB: He had about four brothers and a couple sisters, and Mr. Charlie Royster in Bullock was his half brother. Charlie Royster, he owned a store in Bullock. And his wife was Catherine Royster, she taught school at....

EM: Is Charlie Royster white or black?

DB: He's white.

EM: So your father's grandfather, was raised by white people?

DB: Uh, he was white.

EM: Okay.

DB: We came from a white Royster family.

EM: You did?

DB: Yes.

EM: Okay, uh, so your father was James B. Royster?

DB: Yes.

EM: And his father was....

DB: Willis Royster, which was Charlie Royster's brother.

EM: Okay, so Willy Royster was half brother to Charlie Royster. And Charlie Royster is white?

DB: Wife was Mrs. Catherine Royster, I guess you should know her. She

5/29/96

EM: Yea, I know that part, they related to the Snowall family?

DB: Yes. Uh huh.

EM: Okay, so could your father read and write?

DB: No.

EM: He couldn't read and write?

DB: No, he couldn't.

EM: That's a coincidence he couldn't read and write, and had a background of white family.

DB: I know.

EM: Okay, so, did you ever see any of his brothers and sisters?

DB: My father?

EM: Uh huh.

DB: Oh, yea. I knew most of those.

EM: Are they living now?

DB: No, all dead.

EM: What was their names?

DB: Okay, Willis Royster, Sam Royster, Herbert Royster, Thomas Royster, Gable Royster, and Nanny Royster, Anne Royster....

EM: Nanny?

DB: Uh huh. And Agnes Royster, and Mattie Royster.

EM: That's eight.

DB: Uh huh.

EM: Okay. Did any of them, did you see all of them?

5/29/96

DB: Yes.

EM: Did they live up north, or did they....

DB: Oh, yes, they uh, some of them lived up north, only one of them lived down in the county all the time and that was Anne Royster, all the rest was up north, and they lately after they retired, went, came down.

EM: And where did they make their homes?

DB: Uh, down here.

EM: In Virginia or North Carolina?

DB: North Carolina.

EM: Do they have, still have children? Do you have nieces and nephews still live here, or any of these children, your father and brothers and sisters?

DB: Uh, yes. Some of them still have children.

EM: So, your father never was hired out or anything, 'cause he worked for his own family?

DB: Uh, yes, he uh, was went to Maryland to the uh, what is it, Sparce Point something, whatever. I think that's something like a...

EM: Was that before y'all was born?

DB: Yea, before he was married, Uh huh.

EM: Okay, where did your mother come from?

DB: Oh, she came from Virginia.

EM: You have an idea what part?

DB: Uh, her father used to live in Keysville, Virginia.

EM: Okay.

DB: He farmed up there...

EM: What was your mothers name?

5/29/96

DB: Effie Henderson.

EM: And when she got married, she was Effie Henderson Royster?

DB: Yes. Uh huh.

EM: Did she have brothers and sisters?

DB: Only, uh, three sisters.

EM: Can you name them?

DB: Yes. Lucy, Maddie, and Annie.

EM: Any of them living now?

DB: All dead.

EM: Okay, did they live in Virginia or did they go north?

DB: Well, two of them live in Virginia, and that was Annie, she lived in Keysville, Virginia, and Maddie, she live in Norfolk, Virginia.

EM: And where did the other one...

DB: Lucy?

EM: Lucy.

DB: She lived over in Granville County, 'cause see my mother married two brothers.

EM: Your married James Royster.

DB: Uh huh.

EM: And your, ...

DB: Lucy married Sammy Royster.

EM: Samuel.

DB: Uh huh.

EM: But the married two...

5/29/96

DB: Two brothers.

EM: Okay, which one got married first?

DB: Sammy.

EM: Okay, and then your brother, your mother and Effie got married second.

DB: Well, I don't know, I can't...

EM: Okay. Did uh, how many children did your mother have? Uh, how many sisters and brothers of y'all?

DB: It was eight of us.

EM: Name the boys first.

DB: Okay, uh. Alexander, Vane, James Jr., and Freddie. Okay, Eleanor, Dorothy, and Julia.

EM: Okay, now. Which one, how many of y'all finished high school? **(TAPE SKIPS)** ...you was Dorothy?

DB: Uh huh.

EM: Okay, you was the only one that finished high school?

DB: Uh huh.

EM: Okay, did the rest of them leave, Virginia, go away or what?

DB: Yes. Uh, they went different places, working. But, my oldest sister, she uh, when she came back from the north, she live in Virginia.

EM: Where 'bouts?

DB: Uh, Sudan, Virginia.

EM: Okay, uh, what about the brothers, did they stay around here and farm or sharecrop or what did they do?

DB: Only two of them stayed around, close around home there, other two, one of them lived in Keysville Virginia, and well, both of them live Keysville Virginia, but one, he went away to Pennsylvania and worked in the steel mill.

5/29/96

EM: All of them, all your sisters and brothers still living? Except one?

DB: I don't have but one sister living, and one brother.

EM: Which, which sister is living?

DB: Julia. And Vane.

EM: Okay, uh, and what, Vane live next door?

DB: No, Julia.

EM: Julia live next door?

DB: Uh huh.

EM: And where do Vane live?

DB: Vane live other side of Keysville, Virginia.

EM: Okay, uh, who has the most children?

DB: huh?

EM: Which one of y'all has the most children?

DB: I have the most.

EM: How many you have?

DB: Five. He had five but he lost one.

EM: Okay, Mrs. Royster, uh, what I'm interested in, and what we are working on, and my project is what come first, the church or the school. Or the family, and what, what you going to be working with me, is we going to be trying to work on Cedar Grove school. And Cedar Grove Church. And we going to be working together, trying to get the history of this community and trying to put it together, you and I, and we'll, other relatives in the community. And so today, what we going to do is kind of a rough draft on trying to put this community together because it was divided. And it was, it was. You will have to explain to me is go back, is, if you possibly can and tell me about what happened about the core engineers and tell us about the water and what happened in this community, to divide the community.

DB: Well, water came up in the area, and the peoples had to sell out, you know the land.

5/29/96

EM: What was the reason, did they need water here? This reservoir or was it a, it was just a area where it was a lot of water and low land?

DB: Uh huh, that's what it was, a lot of low land in that area.

EM: And the water, just a lot of water just stayed all the time?

DB: Yea, so, uh, it came in, you know.....

EM: The state of Virginia came in here?

DB: Uh huh, and put the dam.

EM: Put the dam in here?

DB: Yea.

EM: Okay, uh, what kind of, what happened, tell me the story, how did you get a warning or what did they say or how did they do it, just tell me what you can remember.

DB: Well, it's something that the government came about, they just, you know, they, they put this down over there and bordered, and for it to be on a level control they had to come down and put another dam, which it call.....

EM: Kerr Lake?

DB: Kerr Lake dam. Because the other one couldn't keep the water down. So, we had to do something to control the

EM: Okay, okay, I didn't, okay. I was mixed up. So you say, started, the idea was to do one dam?

DB: Uh huh.

EM: ...but when they did that dam, the wells and whatever was too much water?

DB: Uh huh.

EM: And so they have to have a area where it would overflow? A reservoir?

DB: Yes, Uh huh.

EM: And so when they came in here and cut the reservoir out, you saying they took about a thousand acres, or two or three thousand acres of....

5/29/96

DB: Yeah 'bout a thousand acres of land from the people. And it was ??????....they paid them for it, but you know.

EM: How much time did they give you? Did they give you like two or three years or you just?

DB: I guess 'bout a year of so.

EM: Like they did, okay. Okay. And they came in and survey, and said we going, we need a more dam and more water.

DB: Uh huh. That's right, and they taken so many acres, some places they took the whole farm of peoples, you know like that down...

EM: Now did they do Buffalo Junction first or was...part of a reservoir?

DB: Well, it's part, it's part of it.

EM: Was that there before they did the, the Sudan part?

DB: Sudan was the first. I would say.

EM: Okay, so you are saying it took about three or four, five thousand acres of Sudan?

DB: Right.

EM: And then, after they got that part, what they needed more water or didn't work? What did you hear?

DB: Well, they come around and needed more land, so they had to get, you know, more land from people.

EM: And so then it went to Buffalo Junction?

DB: Probably that's what happened, it went up there.

EM: And 'bout five or six thousand acres of land?

DB: Uh huh.

EM: And then after they got up there, why did it have to go to Kerr, I know they did it backwards. After they did the Buffalo Junction part, they had the, what, what was the first part?

5/29/96

DB: Uh, Bo's Island dam. And that cover a whole lot of territory back in there, over, over in uh.....?????? area, all down there they have large bodies of water.

EM: And then they came to Sudan?

DB: Yea, Uh huh.

EM: And then they went up to Buffalo Junction?

DB: Buffalo Junction.

EM: And then they needed an outlet and another reservoir?

DB: Uh huh.

EM: And then they went to Kerr Lake?

DB: Kerr Lake.

EM: In North Carolina.

DB: Right.

EM: And when they did that lake, they took probably ten thousand acres of land or more.

DB: Oh, it was acres and acres.

EM: Okay.

DB: And now they talking about they going to have to shut the, when, whenever the pump give out down here, that's it. You know.

EM: What do you mean? They going to...

DB: You see, it operate by a pump.....

EM: I been over there.

DB: Uh huh. Well, I saw something in the paper about it, I guess you seen in, Oxford paper.

EM: I know Virginia wanted to buy some water from here. But what you saying is when they let the flood gates out, they let the water down to Kerr Lake, and going down to Virginia, and you saying that they going to have to build another flood?

5/29/96

DB: They going to have to do something because they pump that they have, now that pump was put in there way years ago, and they can't even replace it.

EM: Okay, okay.

DB: And whenever it, well, so far it's doing all right now, but whenever it go out, that's the ballgame, because they are not getting enough money to purchase another one.

EM: Okay.

DB: See, when the mine was running, operating. That was a help. They had some help, you know, they have a mine.

EM: How was the tungsten mine helping them? They were getting money?

DB: And loose water from it...

EM: Okay they were buying water?

DB: Uh huh, and sharing you know, helping the electric expense. Which that costs up in the thousands per year. So the paper said.

EM: Okay, so now they, they are trying now, trying to get resources...

DB: Uh huh, just hope it lasts as long as it will last. So....

EM: Tell, what, did the people know what the land was worth, or they just gave them what the thought?

DB: They gave them what the thought it was worth.

EM: And they gave you so many days, so many months to move?

DB: They say the water going to be up in such a length of time, and if you wasn't out at that time, the water just came over. But everybody, you know.

EM: How many stores was, did you go to Sudan when you was a kid?

DB: Oh, yea.

EM: How many stores was there, was there like, Snowball or...

DB: 'bout like Snowballll. 'Cause it had, it had deport there, they have....

EM: A post office.

5/29/96

DB: A post office. A. C. Winbush had a store. Walker had a store there, and they used to be another man there had a store where the depot was. His name was Mr. Wright.

EM: Okay, you had a depot, a post office.....

DB: And the train, the passing train came through there.

EM: Yeah, yeah, I know, I heard about that. Yeah. Okay, now, and then your church then, Cedar Grove had grave, the graveyard was further from the church, was way off from the church?

DB: Uh huh.

EM: Okay, so they came in there, and they took part of y'all's graveyard, part of the acres of the church land?

DB: Uh huh.

EM: Did they give you anything, or you don't know?

DB: Well, I guess they gave the church something for it.

EM: And they said they going to move the bodies?

DB: Yeah, they did. 'Cause it's some bodies back over there. Uh, on my aunt's place.

EM: Now your aunt was named what?

DB: Uh, Susie. Did I put her name down?

EM: Huh uh. Okay, I spelled it the way I think I can spell.

DB: Okay.

EM: Was she ever married? Was she ever married?

DB: Uh huh.

EM: What was her married name?

DB: That's it.

EM: Oh, she married a ?????? What was her maiden name?

5/29/96

DB: Royster.

EM: That's right, that's your sister.

DB: My daddy's sister.

EM: Has children?

DB: No.

EM: They still have the same property? Family property?

DB: The government got it.

EM: They government took it? Okay, so they had a cemetery on that land, a family cemetery?

DB: Uh huh.

EM: So how many graves did they say the supposed to move?

DB: I think it was something like three or four. They brought them down and put them at the church.

EM: Okay, now, did the family see these moved? I'm going to tell you, if you don't be there when the government move them, from my experience, they really don't move them.

DB: I don't think that the family was there. You know, I don't..

EM: I understand what you are saying. Okay, now, what we're, what you're telling me is that, we really don't know how many family grave yards was moved within this whole lake. Until we get a map of engineers to show all the grave yards.

DB: Right.

EM: Because you got relatives and there was other grave yards around in the same area.

DB: That's right.

EM: Uh, was the old school that was in the church in the way or what? Did they tell you?

DB: Uh no, well see, uh, this school, the first school was a...

5/29/96

EM: A log cabin?

DB: A log cabin. Which they used that for the church, until they, after, after they built, you know, they church they have now.

EM: So the church start out in a log cabin?

DB: Yea, at first it was a little bush????? then it went from there to a log cabin.

EM: Okay, and so when it went to the log cabin....

DB: They used that building for the school

EM: And the church. Okay, so, we are back to where we started, what come first, the church or the school. So both of these came at the same time?

DB: Yeah.

EM: The church and the school? Now, when you got old enough, did you see, you just, the church that's there now is the one you, you started in, 'cause you had graduated from high school.

DB: Right, and the school is at the same spot that I went to only, the one that I started to that burnt down, in a fire and they built another one right down there.

EM: Which one got burnt by fire?

DB: The first, the first.....

EM: Not the log cabin?

DB: No, the framing.

EM: I didn't know this. Okay. Okay, now.

DB: ...????????...hadn't told you.

EM: That's right. Okay, now, where was that school at?

DB: Same place as the one down there.....

EM: Same place?

DB: Uh huh.

5/29/96

EM: Okay. When that school caught afire, what grade were you in?

DB: Uh, something like second or third.

EM: Okay, now did you go back into the church until the built another school?

DB: That's right.

EM: You went back to the church?

DB: Went back to the church, that's true.

EM: Was it in the winter time or was it in the summer time?

DB: Uh, it was in the summer time, I think.

EM: Well, you didn't have no electric lights in that school. Not the first one, did you?

DB: Yea.

EM: You did?

DB: Uh huh.

EM: Okay. And what it took a year before they?

DB: Yea, something about like that, a year.

EM: So y'all went to school in the church?

DB: Uh huh.

EM: And then when they built the second one, they built it bigger?

DB: Yes.

EM: Went from a one room to a two room?

DB: Well, it was, it was, the first one was two rooms.

EM: It were?

DB: The frame school.

EM: That got burned up was a two room?

5/29/96

DB: Yeah, Uh huh.

EM: Okay, and they went back and built another two room?

DB: Yea, Uh huh. Well, that was a little bit larger, 'cause they had a little, kitchen and what not, closet and things. It was newer update, you know.

EM: Okay. Where did y'all get your water from?

DB: Uh, had a pump at school?

EM: At school?

DB: Uh huh.

EM: Uh, did you bring, what did you drink, you bring your own jar or glass or what did you drink after?

DB: Uh, yea. Each child had their own glass.

EM: Did you put your name on it, how did you know...

DB: Kept it in your bookbag. They you know got where you could purchase cups, have cups....

EM: All of this took place before the dam or after the dam?

DB: That was, let me see, that was before the dam.

EM: Mrs. Royster, after the second school was built, where were you living then, what house, were you living where you live now?

DB: I was living, no, I was living in Sudan. Sudan.

EM: How far, could you walk over to the school?

DB: Yes.

EM: Approximately how many miles was that?

DB: Uh, about a mile and two-tenths something like that.

EM: Okay, now we want to let the people know on the tape, that Sudan is under water.

5/29/96

DB: Yes.

EM: The government taken it. And they left part of it, and that's why it's hard to describe to me, is where Sudan or how far you walk, because I physically can't see the miles, and we can't do the mileage of it.

DB: That's right.

EM: Okay, now, how many children you think, that lived in Sudan over there where you lived, had to walk, 'bout how many children walked?

DB: Well, I had some cousins, they lived in North Carolina, and they had to come to Cedar Grove school which was in Sudan, Virginia.

EM: Okay, now how many families you think that lived in North Carolina?

DB: Three. Three I know, four!

EM: Okay, it was four families. Was they all of 'em relatives, could you name them?

DB: Uh, each kid?

EM: No, the families? Mothers and fathers.

DB: Okay, uh. Sam and Lucy Royster's kids, Herbert and Philis Royster's kids, James and Maddie Small's kids, and uh, uh, Mr. Luther Evan's kids.

EM: Okay, did they have further to walk than y'all had to walk?

DB: Yea, oh, yea.

EM: Did they walk less than three miles to the school?

DB: I would say, about three miles?

EM: Did anybody over on fifteen, where, Mr. Clark, that area over in there when you make a left, did any of those kids in that area come over to Sudan school?

DB: No, they went to Bullis.

EM: They walked from there to Bullis?

DB: To Bullis, Uh huh.

5/29/96

EM: So what you are saying is, from over there to Cedar Grove to Bullock is about the same amount of miles?

DB: Well you know the big house up on the bridge? Up there on the left, Red Hill?

EM: Huh hu.

DB: The big house.....

EM: I seen a sign said Red Hill.

DB: Okay the bridge, like you are coming down 39, that big bridge, it's a huge big house up on there with pasture.... Well my uncle used to live there, and his kids used to have to walk from up there down to the Cedar Grove school.

EM: Now what did that Red Hill mean? That was the name of that farm?

DB: Uh huh, that was the name of that plantation, Red Hill Plantation. They once had slaves there, they tell me. That's a three story house.

EM: Okay. I got the history on Red Hill, but you know I had it in the wrong place.

DB: Really?

EM: Yes. I thought Red Hill, a plantation, and the history of Red Hill, I thought it was up in Grassy Creek. But now I, it didn't say that, but I took for granted it was at Grassy Creek.

DB: That's the oldest, oldest house around anywhere close in this area, right up there, but they restored it.

EM: I could look at the...Okay.

DB: It's a three story house.

EM: Okay, I seen the books in the library.

DB: And there's another over where my uncle used to live over there. Uh, go down the old Sudan highway, and turn right and go down that road just as you cross the railroad cross, cross the next road, and that's an old house over there. That, the name of that place was, Coleman, Coleman Farm.

EM: Okay, now. This is very confusing. Now, the old Sudan Road, explain the old Sudan Road to me. I know it's funny with us sitting here, 'cause it's water over all of it,

5/29/96

now if we come down the old Sudan road, and when it end, how could we get to over here to the church or what happened?

DB: Okay, uh, before the road came, uh, the water came up, okay, all right, see it was up at the end of 39, it was the old highway, old highway 15 went on through Sudan, bear to the right, and the new one was to the left. See, old, old highway 15 went on into Sudan.....

EM: Old 15 went into Sudan, where you went into town?

DB: Uh huh, into Clarksville.

EM: It went to Su, okay, so, we don't go to Clarksville the way we go now?

DB: No.

EM: We was going the.....

DB: Old way.

EM: So, Okay, so we had to come through a little town....

DB: Okay.

EM: Called Sudan...

DB: That's right.

EM: And then go to Clarksville?

DB: Then go to Clarksville, okay. Well, when you got to Sudan, there was a, a road leading back this way....

EM: Like a crossroad or a fall?

DB: Yea, Uh huh, just like that old, well, you know, part of that is there now. That one that go down like you are coming to go to church.

EM: Right.

DB: Well, there was the highway you come to go to church. On around to our hill, on into Townsville.

5/29/96

EM: Okay, so what you are telling me is that, when they brought the water in here, that made everybody lives in Sudan and in Virginia had to come into North Carolina to go home?

DB: Uh huh, that's true.

EM: But before then, you didn't have to do it?

DB: You didn't have to do it, that's right.

EM: So now, that what made everything here complicated?

DB: Complicated. Right.

EM: You cut off your ties, and half of your church members, your family went to Virginia, one half came this way?

DB: This way, right. And from this way, it was just a wagon road.

EM: What is, you know, what I talk to people about, and what people don't understand and young people, I always talk to older people about, where did black people get so much sacrifice and strength from? That was hardship on people.

DB: It was.

EM: They worked all their life for that little piece of land.

DB: Uh huh.

EM: And here comes somebody tell them they got to go.

DB: Well, and too, you know they had a, what's a situation that happened even before this water came. Because, the Indians owned a lot of land up in the area of Virginia and Carolina, and the white man came and ran them away, 'cause it's Indian, it's Indian graves uh, back, back down toward our hill down in that area....

EM: They still down there now?

DB: I don't know, probably they took 'em up, I'll bet they took 'em up, you know.

EM: Okay, so the Indian was over in the Buffalo Junction area?

DB: Yes, and around in Clarksville, and I, I count up like probably Sudan, they had Indians there, I just tell people I was raised in a little Indian Village [laughing] You know.

5/29/96

EM: Okay, so when you, when your kids was going to school, you really thought that the word Sudan was 'cause they called Indians Sudan?

DB: Well I used to tell them that because it was such an odd name, you know, and I couldn't figure it out, I only, you know, ran across something about Sudan Virginia, Sudan over in Africa when I went to high school, you know, because elementary school didn't have....

EM: And you just brushed it aside?

DB: Yea, Uh huh, just brushed it aside.

EM: Okay.

DB: Oh, take it from Africa, I'm not too familiar with that.

EM: Okay, now here come Eddie McCoy.

DB: Yeah.

EM: I'm back here...

DB: Back here picking up that Africa sound again.

EM: We going to get Sudan straight this time..

DB: Okay, okay, okay. Hopefully.

EM: Hope we get them straight this time. We going to work on it.

DB: Yea.

EM: So, you know, I talk to people. Do you think white people really know how hard black people had when you own a little piece of land that was yours, and then somebody give you some money and you can't read and write, and you got to move with four or five children, it's impossible for you to buy another piece of land.

DB: That's true, and you know, in, to me, a lot of them old peoples, they were, they didn't live long after.... 'cause when you work hard and accumulate something, and then somebody come along and take it, it's just like cutting off part of your life. You know?

EM: 'Cause see, you didn't have much.

DB: Didn't have much, that's true.

5/29/96

EM: And what little bit you had.....

DB: Enough to make a living. And some of the people had, I had a cousin, he had something like eighteen children down there in Sudan. You know? And for him have to leave...

EM: That destroyed the whole family.

DB: I tell you.

EM: But then you had white people that you knew down there that was just as bad as y'all.

DB: Just as bad, that's right.

EM: It destroyed them.

DB: 'Cause uh, like when you go out here and hit 15 going to Clarksville, the second house on the left, this guy live up there, his name is James Wilson, he was born in Sudan, Virginia, too. And, his daddy, he was a farmer, 'cause he and him used to work at the same place, and I was telling him that I was born in Sudan, Virginia, and some of the ladies that he know?????? I said well next time Jimmy Wilson come through here, I'm going to let him tell you where he was born at. So, one night I said, Jimmy come here a minute, I said tell these people where you was born at. He said I was born in Sudan, Virginia. I said, oh, you got it now. Boy you tell somebody you was born in Sudan, Virginia, that place didn't even ever exist. But it did. And after the water, after water took over, highway 15 over there, you know where Travis got these junk cars, well, the next house up from there was a store, and they had a sign over there over on highway 15 saying new Sudan Virginia. Because that store was moved, people that ran that store in old Sudan had to move over their side, and so they named it New Sudan, Virginia. Out there where Travis got those junk cars, the house up above there, the Paris' ran that store, so they start a new store there, they had one in Sudan, and they call that Sudan, Virginia over there, afterwards, New Sudan. And now, Sudan was on the map, if you can find uh, an old highway map, isn't a road map, Sudan was on it.

EM: Uh, you know, we are talking about, this history is not very old, for it to get lost, for what happened to it.

DB: Right.

EM: It was destroyed.

DB: Right. Because now, the water came in here around '51 or '52.

5/29/96

EM: That's right. That's right. That's right.

DB: So that's when everything was wrapped up, you know went under the water.

EM: But what I can't understand is, how did the libraries, how did the clerk of court, how?????? all of those people, erase Sudan off the map?

DB: Don't have it on the map.

EM: Okay, now tell me about the train track, it's under water.

DB: Yes.

EM: And when the water get low, you can see the train track?

DB: You can see the train track.

EM: What happened to the train? When they tore up Sudan?

DB: Well, they cut it out, they had to, tore the railroad track, you know, built a new one.

EM: What happened to the mail?

DB: The mail?

EM: To your own mail? When everybody got up-rooted.

DB: Clarksville. And then the mail man had to bring it out to us.

EM: But you live in North Carolina, did you get your mail, first y'all had to get y'all mail from Virginia, and Virginia....

DB: Well, we live on Rte 1. Clarksville, Virginia. In the fifties, this was Rte. 1 Clarksville, Virginia. We live in North Carolina.

EM: That's what I want you to say to me.

DB: Part of Townsville was too.

EM: They had you in Virginia, and you was living in North Carolina. You got your mail from Virginia, you got your telephone, everything came from Virginia?

DB: That's right, if I go to Oxford, to transact some business and present my driver's license and address on one thing, it used to be a confliction but then, they realized that, you know..

5/29/96

EM: But it stayed like this for a long time...

DB: A long time, yes it did. I had, a North Carolina driver's license and a Virginia address. Rte. 1 Clarksville. We really was messed up.

EM: Okay, now we going back to people that couldn't read and write, again. You know what hardships that brought on those people?

DB: Oh, it was rough.

EM: Those people cried.

DB: I know, 'cause I had two, my two younger brothers. I don't know what happened, but neither one of them could read and write.

EM: How did, they should have been the ones went the furthest in school.

DB: That's right. And my older, oldest sister and older brother, they could, you know, read and write some.

EM: So, when they broke up this school in this community, your brothers and sisters, what happened, they got losted, they got, what happened to them?

DB: When they broke up the school?

EM: Yeah, and....

DB: Well....

EM: Was they, was they upset because they went to church with children in Virginia, and had to go travel, the closest school they had to go to was back to Bullock then.

DB: Uh huh.

EM: Behind you, am I right?

DB: Right. Right.

EM: Wasn't no bus.

DB: All of them was older than I was, see I am the second youngest.

EM: This happened to a lot of families.

5/29/96

DB: That's right. Because my sister, she went to uh, Snowball school. To Snowball high school, but I didn't go out, I graduated from Clarksville, West End high school.

EM: What did you explain to people when you graduate, the water was in here then, wasn't it, or hadn't got here?

DB: No, hadn't got here.

EM: Hadn't gotten here then.

DB: Yea, I was just lucky.

EM: Now, how did you get here, at this spot? Y'all family, what.....

DB: Oh, well my mother and father bought this track of land.

EM: They, was they, okay; your parents was living in Sudan, they had their own land then.

DB: No, Huh uh. They was living on somebody else's land.

EM: Sharecropping?

DB: Sharecropping. Uh huh. Farming for the??????

EM: And they bought this piece of land?

DB: Uh huh.

EM: Okay, how many acres was in it?

DB: Uh, 'bout seventy some acres in uh....

EM: Did they sell it to all the families or just your family, split up between your uncles, aunts, how was it....

DB: No, Huh uh, my mother and father bought this track.

EM: There was seventy some acres?

DB: Yea, 'bout seventy some acres, the government took part of this in the back.

EM: Was this part of Mr. Marrer's land or this was...

5/29/96

DB: No, this was, my mother and father bought this from Alan C. Winbush, and he lived in Sudan, Virginia.

EM: Okay, now I'm mixed up again. Sudan, was still there when you bought this land?

DB: Yeah, oh yes it was there.

EM: Okay, did he buy it because he knew they had to move, or he had bought it before y'all, was he buying it before the government say they going to take....

DB: Oh, yeah, he bought, they bought it before we had the uh, you know, I mean the water took Sudan...

EM: But you had moved here?

DB: Oh, yeah.

EM: He was buying the land, and y'all was living in Sudan.

DB: Moved here I think in '51 or, well I think '52.

EM: Well, he had to then. Y'all, he had put you out there, the government had come in....

DB: That's right. They government was taking....

EM: But he was smart enough to be buying a piece of land, and he had seventy acres...

DB: Right, 'bout sixty or seventy acres.

EM: And the...

DB: Oh, the government took a lot of it in the back.

EM: The water took some more of your land then?

DB: Took my daddy's, some of my mother's and father's land.

EM: You know.....

DB: So, all three of his houses is, you know, this is my mother's home house, and the other two houses, a son and daughter's house. And they built those. And they still have a little land in the back.

EM: It going to take you and I to get this stuff sorted out, you know that?

5/29/96

DB: I know, it's....

EM: Because your parents buying land, and then they come up and had to move, because the government said we going to come and take it for water. And then when they move on this piece, the government come back again, and said we going to take some more, for water again.

DB: They was taking all the land, very few people down that way had land left.

EM: How did they people that survived that stayed in Virginia, it was just that piece, just didn't have a flood, where the church was at?

DB: Yeah, Uh huh, just got lucky. But a lot of places, the water actually did come up further than it was supposed to. If you go down to Townsville, if you little place by the bridge, well, so far it had been lucky for the last couple of years, but that bridge was???? out down there. Water come over, 'cause one, one man ran over in the lake down there, water came up one night. That bridge down there flooded, they mis-estimate the height of that bridge...

EM: When they was building it.

DB: And it used to be worse than it is now. Every time it came, rained two or three days at a time, that bridge would go out.

EM: You all have had a lot of hardships in this area?

DB: Oh, yeah, a lot of hardships, I tell you, whenever, whenever a person get a home, be well satisfied, think they, you know, then here come the government going to move you out, that's wrong.

EM: How many children you have at home with you?

DB: I have two at home with me.

EM: Where are the rest of your children living?

DB: Oh, my oldest son live in Snowball, and my other son, he lives in Maryland, one live in Henderson.

EM: Have you ever, did your father talk about being an outcast from a white family, or being a bastard child or whatever, from just looking at what we've been talking about, and.....

5/29/96

DB: Well, his mother, she was part Indian, so, you know. My family just a duration mixery, you know, all together.

EM: Did he know his mother?

DB: Oh, yes, Uh huh. His mother and father, they married, and they, well, he died uh before any of the, I think about four grand kids was born when he died. He was uh, way on up in his eighties when he died.

EM: Okay, well, uh, why did he, the Roysters, you know, he had to leave that farm, he was part of that child. Of Catherine and what, Charles, Charlie Royster.

DB: Well, look, Charlie Royster's daughter used to work there in that bank at the uh, light in Oxford.

EM: It's uh, Janet Royster.

DB: Janet, Uh huh.

END SIDE A

SIDE B BLANK>>>>>>END OF TAPE