

Uncorrected Transcript of

Interview

with

**ANNIE BELL CHEATHAM**  
**21 MARCH 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 © 1999 The University of North Carolina

[START OF SIDE A]

ANNIE BELL CHEATHAM  
21 MARCH 1995

JAMES EDDIE McCOY: The time is 3:15, the address is 401 McClenaham Street, I will be interviewing Mrs. Annie Bell Cheatham this afternoon. Today is March the 21<sup>st</sup> 1995, I would like for you to tell me your address and you name. Mrs. Cheatham, I would like for you to tell me your name and your address.

ANNIE BELL CHEATHAM: Annie Bell Williams.

EM: That's your maiden name?

AC: Yes, it is.

EM: All right, now what's your married name?

AC: Annie Bell Cheatham.

EM: Annie Bell Cheatham. What's your address here, McClenahan Street?

AC: 401 McClenahan Street, Oxford.

EM: And what year, month, year your birthday and month?

AC: My birthday was 1911.

EM: Yeah, 1911, February?

AC: February the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

EM: Okay, so you are 85?

AC: I'm 85 years old.

EM: When you was a kid growing up, what community did you grow up in?

AC: Uh, I grewed up in, we called it the flat woods. I grewed up in the flat woods.

EM: Uh huh, and were you, your parents, were y'all born down there, your family came from down there?

AC: Yes, my family came from the flat woods.

EM: Were your father a sharecropper or ...?

AC: Yes, he was.

EM: On what, whose, whose farm was he a sharecropper on?

AC: William Crews.

EM: William Crews?

AC: Uh-huh.

EM: Tell me something about Mr. Crews.

AC: Mr. Crews was a white man, and he was a very nice man, and we lived there with him about twelve years.

EM: And you thought he was a fair man?

AC: He was, and he was a farmer, of course he was.

EM: What you got tired of, or your children, your sister and brother got too old, for your parents to sharecrop or what happened?

AC: Well, we decided to come out the flat woods and live in the flat woods, and my father decided he wanted to get out from there, and come out, you know, and so we moved up here on the Raleigh Road, and 'bout five miles from Oxford.

EM: How far, how long did you live there, before you went to Bell Town?

AC: That was all Bell Town, that was Bell Town to us.

EM: Oh, okay, okay, but that's Bell Town Community?

AC: Yeah.

EM: Okay, now uh, what year, do you have an idea what year y'all moved to Bell Town?

AC: I don't know.

EM: What did your father do after y'all moved?

AC: Well, we farmed, we still farmed.

EM: For who, what was that farm, you still sharecropping or what?

AC: We still sharecropping.

EM: For who?....That's ok, uh, how many children did you have, Mrs. Cheatham?

AC: Twelve.

EM: You had twelve children?

AC: Twelve children.

EM: Uh, how many living now?

AC: You mean how many did I have?

EM: Uh-huh.

AC: I may have told you wrong on that one.....

EM: How many did you have?

AC: I had uh, twelve children, yes I did, twelve children.

EM: How many boys did you have?

AC: Let me see now....

EM: Name them.

AC: Alec Williams, Roy Williams, Willie Williams, Johnny Williams, James Williams, Eric Williams, Benny Williams.

EM: Now the girls.

AC: Nancy Williams, Betsy Williams, Ester Williams....

EM: She was a Williams before she married a Cooper, 'cause she was your daughter.

AC: Yeah, ..

EM: Ester, was she the baby?

AC: Yeah, she was the baby.

EM: Okay, that's okay, now.. were, what, were your, were your kids, were your brothers any move with your father when y'all moved to Bell Town?

AC: Oh, no, all us moved from over there....

EM: Okay, you was married?

AC: No.

EM: You wasn't married when you moved?

AC: No...

EM: At Mr. Crews farm?

AC: Yes, any of us moved from the backwoods, the family, the whole family moved.

EM: Y'all moved as a family?

AC: Yes, right up here on Raleigh road.

EM: Okay.

AC: Up here next to Will Kern, that was our farm right there.

EM: Will Kern?

AC: Will Kern, Will Kern farm.

EM: Tell me about, tell me something about Mr. Will.

AC: Mr. Will Kern, he was a nice man, nice to work with, and he tried to do all he could to help us, but he was poor too.

EM: Uh huh, he didn't have much, Uh-huh. Everybody was struggling.

AC: That's right, that's right.

EM: But y'all were family?

AC: Yeah, that's right we was a family folks.

EM: Don't matter what color y'all was, all of y'all was family?

AC: That's right.

EM: Well, that was nice, that mean a lot if somebody treat you right.

AC: Yeah....

EM: And you know, if you fair, and he treat you nice...

AC: He was, he was.

EM: And so y'all sharecropped there?

AC: We sharecropped, in his garden, what they had was ours.

EM: That was nice.

AC: I been to that garden a many a day and got something.

EM: And you didn't have to eat out on the porch or nothing?

AC: Oh no...

EM: If they was there, they didn't...

AC: Oh, no siree

EM: So, y'all stayed at Mr. Will Kern's, just guess, about how many years y'all stayed with him?

AC: I would say twelve years..

EM: You stayed with him about twelve years?

AC: Yeah.

EM: Okay, when did you get married, was it after you moved to Mr. Will Kern?

AC: Yeah.

EM: Or was it when you was down at blackground in the flatwoods?

AC: No, I was just a child in the flatwoods. I don't know when I got married...

EM: Okay, did your brothers and sisters, how many brothers and sisters was it with y'all? How many sisters did you have and how many brothers did you have?

AC: I had four sisters and five brothers.

EM: Did they, how far did they go in school?

AC: Some way up in the ninth grade.

EM: To the ninth grade?

AC: Uh huh, and some stopped in the eighth grade.

EM: Okay.

AC: And they, they uh, Johnny, at that time, when they got old enough, now we didn't have no rules like we got now, they had to get up there and help clean up the road, you know.

EM: 'Cause you had like wagon paths?

AC: Yeah, I mean, the real road, the real road.

EM: I understand.

AC: Like they have convicts now, but at the same time, when you got a certain age, when you got eighteen years old, you had to go up there, and help keep up the road, we, we didn't have that then.

EM: The state wasn't taking care of....

AC: No, no.

EM: ...of the roads.

AC: That's right, they had to go up there, certain time, yeah, they had to go up there, when they got eighteen, they had to go up there and help keep up that road.

EM: Did they get paid, or they just....

AC: No.

EM: That's just, part of your job.

AC: You got eighteen years old, you go up there and help keep that road, spots and what not.

EM: So uh, which one of your brothers and sisters started leaving Oxford, going away, and left, did any of them leave Oxford, go away for a better job, or went to another state?

AC: Uh yeah, my brother Lester, he went to Richmond, he left Richmond and went to the Army, that's where he died.

EM: He got killed in service?

AC: Yeah.

EM: Okay, was he, who else left?

AC: My brother Alec William.

EM: Where did he go?

AC: He went to the army too.

EM: Did it, did he come back to Oxford, or did he live somewhere else?

AC: No, he came back here, 'cause he married Ellen.

EM: Uh-huh.

AC: After he came back here.

EM: Did any of your sisters leave town and go away, up north?

AC: No, no.

EM: All of them stayed here?

AC: Yeah, stayed around, they got married some, but you know, stayed around.

EM: Now, I know what the flat woods mean, but I would like for you explain for someone listening to the tape, as say what is a, what you call flatwood. Now, you explain to me what y'all call flatwood.

AC: Well, it was a way back place, it wasn't near no houses or nothing, we live way back, we farmed with Mr. Crews, he was a nice person, he was very nice, nice to us, but we just got tired of living back, and my father decided he was going to come out, and buy a place out on the road, which he did. And we moved out on the road, on Raleigh road.

EM: Now, flat wood, is that, when you live so far back in the woods, like a mile, a mile and a half, you just can't walk out of there as you talk about driving out of there, and, a lot of times y'all probably got a slide hooked to mules up, and y'all came out that way.

AC: Had to get out of there sometimes...

EM: And that's what the kids need to know what flat wood is. That's what it was.

AC: That's right

EM: The trees wasn't flat, the whole thing was flat, and that's why they call it flatwood.

AC: That's right.

EM: 'Cause everything was flat.

AC: Everything, everything.

EM: And they weren't no way in and weren't no way out but walk out....

AC: Walk....

EM: A bus or something...

AC: That's right, my daddy used to hook up the wagon, like we come to church, we get, all us get dressed and all get on that wagon, come down the street.

EM: And then sometimes the ladies come to your church would bring two pair of shoes.

AC: We did that many times, or bring a rag when we get to church clean my shoes off.

EM: And carry two, one to keep, one to don't be going to church muddy, and the one to go into church be clean.

AC: That's the truth.

EM: Two pair.

AC: And you come to church, and bring dinner, had to bring own wagon, go to dinner on the wagon, and going to stay over there the night, we won't go back in the flatwoods, going to stay over there in the night, like having revival, some nights we stay over there until my mom bring enough dinner for dinner, for our dinner and then have some snacks to eat and stuff.

EM: And y'all stay in the church all night?

AC: No, we have a lantern, had two or three lanterns hanging on that wagon.

EM: Come on Mrs. Hicks.

AC: It's the truth.....?????? had lantern, see they need it in the day, but we had heat make them children feel up the lanterns with oil, and hang the lantern on the back of, this is the wagon here, that's the mule up there, hang them lanterns on back here, where you hang it, see that light would shine through here to the mule. That's we way it go.

EM: Uh huh, and all y'all slept in the back of that wagon?

AC: Yeah, we coming homing, we coming home.....???????? didn't know nothing til we got home, my dad would drive it.

EM: And you talking about two or three hours.

AC: Yeah, sure, sure. We did that from Sanford a lot.

EM: Had a good time didn't you?

AC: Yeah.

EM: 'Cause everybody had the same...

AC: Everybody had the, it would be wagons just like this, one behind the other.

EM: Like a wagon train.

AC: That's right, coming home, and sometime they would be hollering and singing and going on....

EM: Had a good time, didn't you?

AC: Yeah, had a good time, too. Had a good time.

EM: What about uh, your minister, uh, did he stay awhile, did you have the same minister would stay a long time with you?

AC: Yeah, he would.....???????? and came back home on the wagon, rode on the wagon from the church, and our minister, and he would go to our home and spend the night.

EM: He would? That was nice.

AC: Yes, come down that wagon and spend the night, nobody didn't think nothing about it at that time.

EM: I understand.

AC: Come and spend the night, next day he .....?????????? and help my daddy, uh, with tobacco, and they just done until time to go to church. Mom be home fixing dinner and everything, and we would get on that wagon, we go on to, and tomorrow night he go to another person's home...

EM: I understand. Y'all had it tough didn't you?

AC: Yeah, but it didn't seem like that...

EM: I understand.

AC: Everybody was .....??????????

EM: So, your brothers and sisters got along with Mr. Kern?

AC: Oh, yeah.

EM: When y'all worked on his farm?

AC: Oh yeah.

EM: No problem? He treated everybody the same?

AC: Yeah.

EM: Was there other families that lived..

AC: Yeah, there was other families that live on the place too.

EM: Name some people that live on that other family, that you go..

AC: Uh, Nick Parker lived there.

EM: Nick Parker?

AC: Nick Parker.

EM: Oh yeah.

AC: Moved from down here to Bobbit, Clarence Bobbit.

EM: Name somebody else.

AC: Uh, trying to think...

EM: You talking about Nick and Willa Parker?

AC: Yh huh, Nick, uh huh, 'cause old man Nick, he's the daddy.....?????????

EM: Okay, uh, how many people that lived down in the flatwood, you had to walk out of there to blackground school?

AC: Yeah, sure we walked through, sure we...

EM: How many miles was that you think, it's almost back at the church.

AC: It was, it was back at the church...

EM: Yeah, 'cause the school wasn't far from the church.

AC: It sure weren't...

EM: So, you had to walk about three or four miles a day?

AC: Yeah, every bit of that, and it get so cold you 'bout freezing, but we would come through here, above where the cemetery, and we come up back of that, so we walked up that railroad, come up the railroad, and walk up that uh, and got up that, the school is back of the cemetery, and you come up this way, and you got to the school of course before you did the church. And we walk from there, we'd be crying and going on, it'd be so cold and everything, but we had to try to make it.

EM: And when you got to school, school was half cold...

AC: Yeah, we had to gather in the wood, and .....????????, gather in the wood and light it and stuff, and children would be just crying, going to get the fire started.

EM: And what about, y'all didn't have no bathroom.

AC: No, no, you use a tub, only way to use the bathroom was a tub.

EM: And when you was in school, everybody had to go out in the woods on their own away...

AC: That's where we had to go, out in the woods.

EM: No toilet for nobody.

AC: No, no, no, no, you made your own toilet.

EM: Who else brought wood to the, other than y'all was cutting it, did anybody bring, did the parents bring wood to keep the school going?

AC: They would bring a little something sometimes, but see they on other folks farms too, you see, they couldn't just haul a little wood just anytime you know.

EM: I understand, right, like if you on, okay, everybody kid that went to your school was sharecroppers, uh, working on halves, so they couldn't bring wood like a person could.

AC: But, see like, you get through your class, I get through, now we had timber, we, they sent us this time, we go and break down limbs, and we get stuff now for tomorrow, we get our stuff and bring it in and put it down for in the morning. Children would come in there, just crying just so cold, now we had frosts then, we had frosts, weren't no...????????, we had frosts, everything just as white, and you get out there, and the children just be crying, 'cause it was frost, it was cold. But we would get that fire going.....and Mrs. Harris, she drove over from.....????????

EM: What was her name, Lucretia Harris?

AC: Lucretia Harris. She drove old horse, just something to get on the road, to get killed by, she got there, and the bigger boys, took that horse and tied it, and they would tie him where he could bite off the limbs, you know, something to eat, or where he could get a little grass. And we toted water..

EM: How far did you have to go get the water?

AC: I tell you, we toted water from the school, you know where Alec Hunt used to live? Way on that hill, we toted, well, we come, this school over here now, in these woods, Mr. Hunt's house sitting over yonder, school was sitting way back yonder, .....???????? we had to take turns and go to that spring, and get water, and we toted to the school. I think, Mrs. Harris, can I go to the spring. Yeah. If you done got through your lesson, you could go.

EM: But it always had to be two or three people, wouldn't let nobody, you had to go far, one person couldn't.....

AC: That's right, couldn't bring nothing back.

EM: So, everyday you had to have a fresh bucket of water?

AC: Oh yeah, two a day. We get us a bucket full for our lunch, everybody sitting on a bench, bring a bench out to school, all of us sitting on a bench. And some sitting on the ground, eating them peas and cornbread, and potatoes, some of them had sweet potatoes, you know, and maybe you have a little something different, I go out and buy a little piece.....

EM: That was nice, all y'all were family?

AC: Sure we were.

EM: 'Cause you didn't have nothing.

AC: We didn't have, one have about as much as the other one, nobody have nothing.

EM: The school, who built that school, you ever heard who built that school?

AC: No, I don't, I don't...

EM: Was it on a white man's land, or a black's had, or the state?

AC: State, I think, had it. From the.....?????, like this was the school, the lodge was sitting off like that that, from the school, great big old, that was the lodge.

EM: What lodge--Masonic?

AC: Yeah, they just moved in from down there, they used to be back in them woods, and the school was sitting here, and the lodge would be sitting back like that from the school.

EM: Was that Mr. Kern's property?

AC: No, that was back down yonder in the flatwoods then, we was in no man's land then.

EM: So uh, what happened when Mrs., when the teacher got sick, who would teach school, or couldn't get...

AC: You know Ethel Holm?

EM: Uh-huh.

AC: Well, she have been down there and taught, in Mrs. Harris' place.

EM: And who else?

AC: Uh, Mrs. Ridley.....

EM: Mrs. Chavis Ridley.

AC: Yeah, that's who, she would come up there and teach, substitute, you know sometimes, yeah, sure would.

EM: So, so when y'all went to get the water, you would be gone about an hour, half an hour.

AC: We made it that long..

EM: Huh?

AC: We made it that long...

EM: Yeah, but I'm just saying, it was actually a long way.

AC: It was a long way, long ways.

EM: Now, y'all went to the ninth grade?

AC: Yeah.

EM: She teach the first grade, seventh grade, eighth grade, ninth grade.

AC: Uh huh, but McCoy, the grades weren't like it is now.

EM: But when she teaching the first grade, what do you all children be doing? Getting your lesson out for when she get to y'all?

AC: That's right, we had a long, it was a shelf, and great long shelf, long as that, and a whole lot of us, to get to it, we could get to that shelf, and we could work on that shelf. Have our pencil and paper you know, it would come a time of day when she almost time to leave, we had to get on that table, and kind of sketch our lesson out, for the, study tonight for tomorrow.

EM: Now, what about lights in the schools?

AC: Had lamp lights.

EM: You didn't have no lights at home?

AC: We had lights at home, but we didn't have to electric, we had lanterns and lamps, lamp light.

EM: Yeah, if you didn't have lights at school, you know you didn't have none at home.

AC: No, we had lamps..

EM: Huh?

AC: Like them sitting here, I keep mine.

EM: Oh, that's the kind you had?

AC: Yes sir.

EM: At home too?

AC: Yes sir, that's all we had was lamp lights.

EM: Now, if Mr. Kern was nice to y'all, did y'all raise everything, didn't have to go to town for nothing like meat, hogs...

AC: Yeah, they raised hogs, and my daddy always aged them...

EM: You had flour and stuff like that?

AC: Yeah, and he had wheat, and have, and when the folks come around to cut wheat, my momma always cooked dinner. You know for, wheat cutters, wheat cutters come today, you gotta fix dinner. So, she stayed then, and fixed a big dinner, for the wheat cutters, they would get to our house about dinner time, and they would eat dinner.....?????

EM: And you'd go from one community to the other?

AC: Yeah, yeah, everybody had wheat, they would go around, and you would be know, you had let us know when he at your house....

EM: And how many people prepare food...

AC: Yeah, and you know that he would be at your house tomorrow, and you get ready for him tomorrow to cook dinner and all.

EM: Tell me about your father, could he read and write?

AC: Yeah, he could, you could understand he didn't know...but he could, he could....

EM: He knew the alphabet..

AC: Yeah, yeah yeah..

EM: What about your mother?

AC: She could...

EM: She could read and write?

AC: Yeah, good missionary.

EM: How far you think she went in school?

AC: She didn't go too far, I know that.

EM: Where did she come from, did she come from down in flatwood, or she came from somewhere else?

AC: She, no, she was a country woman, I know that. I would say she come from, yeah, she did, yeah, 'cause I used to go to her momma's house. She, she, now I say flatwood 'cause it was back, way back, I have been there, and walked with her to her momma's house. She, we had to go down the railroad, like say from Clay's, you had to walk down that railroad, go way on up there, I'd say about a mile, and then we'd turn and went down, to where they lived.

EM: Which parents you think that came up in slavery, did your mother's side have any?

AC: Yeah, my momma did, 'cause she has made us cry many times telling.

EM: Tell me something what she said.

AC: Tell how she come, and we'd get to complaining, and she'd say listen children, said y'all don't know nothing, said then she'd tell, this is what momma did.....?????????

EM: Oh yeah? Was it by hisself or he would split the family.

AC: He'd split the family, he said, he would sit and tell us about it.

EM: And they sent his children and wife one way, and he never seen his family no more?

AC: No, he didn't, and they are not Cheatham's, he told us, he said we are not Cheathams.

EM: What did he say his name was?

AC: Uh, Alans.

EM: Alans was his name?

AC: That's right.

EM: And they changed his name to Cheatham?

AC: Cheatham. See, that's who they sold him to.

EM: Mr. Cheatham?

AC: Yeah, he was sold to the Cheathams.

EM: Uh huh, but he had sense enough to keep his old, he could remember his own old name.

AC: Yeah, he could write his name as good as anybody. He could write his name and things.

EM: Okay.

AC: Yeah, he was a Cheatham. That's why we Cheathams.

EM: But that's not his family real name?

AC: No

EM: They changed his name?

AC: That's right.

EM: To Cheatham?

AC: That's right. He said he stood there and saw him when they sold him, and a whole lot of other people.

EM: Where was this at, North Carolina?

AC: Uh huh, North Carolina.

EM: Do you, what farm did he come off, what plantation did he come off of, your husband?

AC: He, he was a Alan, I mean, that's the farm he came off of, he was a, he came off, and they sold him to a Cheatham, sold him to the Alans.

EM: Do you know how much they sold him for?

AC: No, I don't. He didn't say how much they sold him for, but the women, the white men, they would want the women, so they could cook, and wash, and do all that, he said he would work with them, and the women would have to cook and do, and his foot, great big old thing busted in his foot, where he said he worked....

EM: Frost bitten?

AC: Uh huh, he said he didn't know nothing about no shoes. He worked, he said he get up soon in the morning, go over there, grubbing them, getting them grubs out of the ground, roots and things, didn't have no breakfast or nothing.

EM: Breaking up new ground?

AC: Yeah, land too. And he said the women, they would keep the women in the house, 'cause they do the cooking, and doing, and the white men would go with the black women.

EM: Uh huh, and they didn't have no choice?

AC: No, they didn't have no choice, of course they didn't.

EM: So, if they wanted to go with a black man's wife, they could go whenever they got ready?

AC: Yeah, that's what they did.

EM: And nothing could be done about it.

AC: Said you better not say nothing about it, say they will hang him, you wouldn't, you couldn't do nothing.

EM: And when they have a hanging, they bring and let all the blacks come and see it.

AC: Right, and he said right up here, bless his heart, he could tell you everything, right up here, where you go up to, up here way you go up to, I say way you go to New Light....

EM: On Goshen street?

AC: Uh huh, when you get up there, when you go up there hill, right to your left there where you don't see no houses, he said they hung folks right there.

EM: Oh, that's why they call it lynching hill?

AC: That's, that's exactly what he said. He said, he told us many times, he called and carried us up there, he said they used to lynch folks right up there. That's the reason they call it Lynching Hill. That's where they hang, they get you out of your house at night, you better not say anything, they kill you.

EM: So, some of the white girls, the black women didn't even come back at night, they stayed if they wanted them to stay.

AC: Oh, they didn't have no choice.

EM: But, the white women didn't have no choice either.

AC: No, no they didn't have no choice.

EM: She knew her husband was going with black women.

AC: She, was right there. Say, you better not say nothing. And he said when they sold, said, he said, he would tell us, sitting around the fire one night, he would tell, and he would just cry so hard. He said the children, girls and things, children didn't want to lose their parents, maybe you say, well, I want her.

EM: And they split the family?

AC: They bid you off, bid you off, he said they bid you off.

EM: And split them all up.

AC: Yes, and send you to that man, when a man was up there, said there was a boy, said well I want that one, and said he was sold, he said he was sold. Better not cry, when you cry, then they would beat you. Lord, he told us so many, we'd cry, used to cry sitting around the fireplace. Crying all, he'd be so pitiful.

EM: 'Bout how old did he live to get?

AC: Well, he was ninety, ninety, I believe it was ninety four years old.

EM: He went through all of that, and lived that long.

AC: Had to go through it to live. I would look at him sometimes, and on Sunday, he go to church though, over there on Harris' grove, he went, he would get on the horse, take his shoes and tie, tie them together, and throw them shoes across that horse.

EM: ....??? he didn't put his shoes on....

AC: Then when he get there, he put his shoes on. I have, I have cried so many times for him, and I won't beat it or nothing, but I know that was wrong.

EM: Yeah, 'cause it split everybody up.

AC: Yeah.

EM: And it worry you to death.

AC: Lord have mercy.

EM: Don't know where your wife, don't know where your children, and won't ever see them no more.

AC: That's true, some people didn't never see, didn't never see them.....?????????  
and said they take some of the children and tie them, and lead them on, like it was a cow or something. This is mine. Oh lord.

EM: Just tie them, and drag them on.

AC: Yeah, child crying, him looking back and wanting to go with momma. Momma crying too, but she couldn't do nothing. Had to have somebody to stay.

EM: Yeah, if you want to live.

AC: Yeah, we have been through something in this world. Not just me and you, but think about the black folks, Lord have mercy, just so pitiful.

EM: What, what did he do, was he a carpenter or what was he?

AC: Who?

EM: Your bro, Mr. Cheatham, your, your...

AC: No, just a farmer, just a straight farmer. He didn't have time to do nothing but farm.

EM: He worked out in the field all his life?

AC: He worked, yeah, he worked all the time, he didn't have time to go, do, I worked with Mr. So and so.

EM: He ain't never went to school?

AC: No.

EM: Didn't know about reading and writing or nothing?

AC: No.

EM: But just hard work.

AC: Yeah, he could, he could sketch his name, yeah, he could get his name, get his name down, so you could understand him.

EM: Did he ever try after people got free, did he ever tell y'all he tried to find his family, or just couldn't.

AC: No....

EM: Or it was just too late?

AC: It was too late, and he done got old...

EM: Did he know how many brothers and sisters he had?

AC: Yeah, he know it, he know it, he know his people.

EM: Oh, he was big enough.

AC: Yeah, 'cause he told us, he told us, he said we are not Cheathams, we ain't no Cheathams. And then he would tell of how they sold him, and everything, just a crowd of folks standing around there, waiting for, I said get his nigger, that's what they said, get his nigger, he said they put you up on a great big block, and make you stand on that block, and man bid you off just like you was dogs, you was standing there and looking at mamma in front of everybody and you can't say nothing. He said, no, he said we ain't no Cheatham's, we weren't no Cheathams. Said we was Alans

EM: Uh huh, he was smart enough to keep his name, wasn't he?

AC: He kept his name.

EM: Could your father do carpentry work? Who made barns and did work?

AC: Well, they see see, when he got out from under them, see they would have barn raisings.

EM: What that mean, explain that to me.

AC: They would raise barns, like...

EM: A group of people would get together and build a barn?

AC: That's right. They could do it then when they got out from under them, see then they could work together, black folks could work together.

EM: Oh, okay.

AC: 'Cause you couldn't do it while you, in that slave, see, they got their own slaves then, and they go down to different houses, I say Mr. Hayes, they go out one day and raise his barn, get his barn, well maybe next day, maybe Mr. Clyde's day. That's what they were, they could do it then, 'cause they was out from under those white folks.

EM: So they knew how to carpentry and do their own work?

AC: Yeah, yeah.

EM: The white man didn't teach them nothing, they didn't need them?

AC: No, they just go out there and did what they did.

EM: And they built their own houses, everybody, everything...

AC: One would help the other one, well you see you couldn't do it when you was hooked under them white folks, you did, 'cause all your days belonged to him.

EM: Uh huh, what about on Sundays, what did he say they did on Sundays in slavery? Did they have .....???

AC: He said, yeah, he said on Sundays, he said the only way you got to church on Sunday, he said they would, he said the way he heard service on Sunday, what he said, he said they would turn a **pot down???**, and he said that's the way they got that service, and they have service so they wouldn't, the white folks wouldn't, they was in slavery then, so the white folks wouldn't hear them.

EM: Did he ever tell you they carried some slaves to church with them?

AC: No, he ain't never said that.

EM: They didn't never go to church with him?

AC: No, never hear him say about them going to church. But he said they used to turn **pots down??** and they would get down on their knees, around the pot, and catch the sound, you know.

EM: 'Cause that keeps it down.

AC: Yeah.

EM: Oh, with all the sound, everybody getting praying, sing on the pot.

AC: That's right.

EM: And that noise goes into the pot, and the sound don't go out.

AC: That's what he said, he said it was done, I done it a many, he said, Lord, he started crying, he said I did it a many of times.

EM: Now, was cornbread cake on Sundays? That's what I heard some people say. What kind of bread did they eat?

AC: Momma would cook us batter bread.

EM: What is that?

AC: That's bread, well, you make it up just like you cooking a cake.

EM: Uh-huh.

AC: And we always had chickens, and stuff, you know, 'cause you could raise them yourself. And put that, make that up just like you are cooking a cake. And put in the stove.

EM: Uh-huh.

AC: And come out, just look just like a cake.

EM: Cake, Uh-huh. But uh, did they have a lot of slaves on that farm?

AC: Yeah, he said they did.

EM: Was it in Granville County....?

AC: That's all you saw was slaves, you see then.

EM: Was it in Granville County, or was it another county?

AC: It must have been another county, I don't think it was in Granville County, I don't reckon it was in Granville. 'Cause he was raised in Vance County.

EM: Okay, okay.

AC: See, that's his home, Vance County.

EM: Oh, okay, and was Mr., your, your husband born at? Was he born over there, or after they moved the plantation?

AC: Over here, he said, he was born over here...

EM: In Granville County.

AC: Uh huh, but he was just a little boy.

EM: What farm, was he on the Kern farm then?

AC: No, first place I know that, that they lived was over here back of Bell Town, Bell Town, but it was way back, back, he could tell you a lot about Bell Town back over there...

EM: How did you meet Mr. Cheatham?

AC: Well, we went, we met, we uh, after they got out from under slavery, all the slaves, everybody was out of slavery then, we worked together in tobacco, we helped his family, and they helped this family, that's the way....

EM: But don't you think it was better back then, with all the families was together working together than the way we doing it now?

AC: Of course, of course. I believe that...

EM: But you were closer then.

AC: You were closer...

EM: And .....???? go to somebody's house....

AC: Yeah, you telling the truth, 'cause Mrs. Hayes and them, they were our next door neighbors, if our cow come in first, I had to tell Mrs. Hayes.

EM: What was Mrs. Hayes full name?

AC: Uh, uh, Mary.

EM: Mary Hayes?

AC: Uh-huh.

EM: Okay.

AC: I had to carry her, momma sent her eggs, she would have eggs to cook her a pudding, pudding, that's what they called them then. Sugar pudding, Uh-huh.

EM: What, how many children did Mrs. Hayes have?

AC: Think she had five, I know she had five.

EM: Was they near your children's age?

AC: Yeah, .....???????

EM: Alright, who else lived near y'all where y'all borrowed stuff from, and loaned stuffs.

AC: Mrs. Caldwell, and all that bunch down in there.

EM: What's her name, what Mrs. Caldwell first name?

AC: Lessy Caldwell.

EM: Lessy Collin or...

AC: Caldwell.....All of us lived down there, and the Crewss, uh sent it down in there.

EM: Uh huh, it's hard to think about it, isn't it?

AC: No, I don't think it about it no more, I get on it sometimes, just get it on my mind...

EM: Alright now, after you and Mr. Cheatham got married, where was y'all living at?

AC: Living at Clay.

EM: You was down at Clay Station?

AC: Where you turn, you know, to go into the church?

EM: Uh-huh...

AC: You know the little house was sitting there...

EM: Uh-huh...

AC: That's where we went to. They were living there when we got married until we moved in with them.

EM: But Belton Creek Church wasn't there, it wasn't a church there...

AC: No, see the church was up here at Bell Town.

EM: That's what I'm saying.

AC: Yeah, that's where our church was, but see, and, and, they said there was an old church down there, but .....??????, and so Calvin Crews and bunch of them got in together and built a church up here at Bell Town where the school was.

EM: Okay.

AC: That's where Belton's Creek was.

EM: Belton's Creek moved into the school, blackground school?

AC: It moved, they built, see, they built another little church down there at Belton Creek, and then they towed that little thing they had....

EM: School house, like a pack house...

AC: Uh huh, and so they kept building and kept building....

EM: And moved the children into the school, church. But Bell Town, Belton Creek came from Bell Town.

AC: Bell Town.

EM: It was named Bell Town Church.

AC: That's right, Calvin Crews and them built, called it Bell Town.

EM: And when they moved to, down to Clay, they kept the Bell, but they put the creek on to it. Now, who was your family, who at Bell Town, your uncle who? Calvin who?

AC: Uncle Calvin Crews.

EM: Alright who else?

AC: And uh, Mr. Will Cheatham.

EM: Who was Mr. Cheatham, was he related to your husband?

AC: That as uh, Calvin and them's daddy.

EM: Tell me who else.

AC: Mr. McCoy.....

EM: Mr. Charlie Bell?

AC: Yeah, the Bell family, that's right, the Bell family. All that....

EM: What about Mr. Robertson?

AC: Right..

EM: Uh, Colonel Robertson?

AC: That's right. All them Bell Town Negroes, all us. I went to school Bell Town.

EM: Okay, so, so, Mr. Bell, Crews, and Williams, and all these guys got together, and uh, in Bell Town, what the church got too small or wasn't big enough for the members, or they....split..

AC: Well, see they done got out from under this.....????? and that's all they had to worship in.

EM: Oh, okay, now I understand what you are saying, what you are telling me, that Bell Town was a school, because the white man didn't mind you going to school, but he wasn't let you have a church, 'cause you didn't have the land.

AC: No, didn't have no church, just had a little....

EM: Pack house, for the school.

AC: Yes, yes, yes.

EM: Okay, and the church had to come out of the pack house school, and do everything there, until you come out from under slavery.

AC: Come out from under slavery, and when they come out...

EM: When you came out from under that then, somebody went down to Clay and built Belton Creek.

AC: And that was a little bitty old church, just , I would just say something get out from this...

EM: Was it big as this room?

AC: I don't believe it was ....I went to school there too, I'd say about like this, might be a little larger.

EM: 'Bout fifteen by fifteen?

AC: yeah, something about like that. I would say.

EM: And you didn't have no insulation or nothing?

AC: Oh, no, no, no, you just there, I'd here Mr. Calvin Crews get up in church and tell it, he just cry. I said...

EM: Mr. Calvin Crews?

AC: Uh huh, Calvin Crews.

EM: Uh...

AC: He lived, he lived just across the street up there at Bell Town. And Will, Will Cheatham.

EM: Tell me about him.

AC: That was .....???? and them's father, he lived up there too.

EM: Okay, now as a family, I've been looking for, that uh, that was the Kazalt, you ever knew the Kazalt's that lived in Bell Town? One of the children went off, and was the head of Livingstone College, uh, uh, Barbara Scosher. Did you know that?

AC: huh uh, I believe, I don't believe I ever knowed that, I known about them.

EM: You knew the Pirses??, Mrs. Alan?

AC: yeah, yeah, I know all them, I know the Pirses??, Alex and all them, I know them.

EM: And the Powell's

AC: yeah, yeah. Mr. Powell, he was one of the main leaders of that school, he, he considered himself had more money, which he did, which he did. And uh, so he was one

of the leaders getting that school, you know getting things going up at Bell Town. Always wanted to get all together to him....

EM: He was a driving man, he always wanted better?

AC: Yeah, yeah. Yes sir. Yes sir. He sure was.

EM: He was like a teacher?

AC: That's right...

EM: He always wanted you to do better and be better.

AC: He always thought that, he always thought that.

EM: That's just like car, or anything you had, he always wanted to say you could be better.

AC: That's true, and you know, his children went, his children went, 'cause he was behind them you know, he knew how to do it. He knew how to do it. ....????????? Sure was, I know him real good.

EM: So when y'all went to Sunday school, did you have church every Sunday, or you had it every other Sunday, how was it then?

AC: We had it every other Sunday, we didn't have church every Sunday, 'cause it was so bad, you know, for us to get there.

EM: Well who...

AC: Now, when we moved up here, we used to walk from down here, where we moved to down here...

EM: Bell Town?

AC: Bell Town, we used to walk up to that one, Sunday School...

EM: Okay, you weren't far from it?

AC: No, no, we would get out there and walk, and uh, the Hazens was on that line, and uh, different ones, you know, and would get out there then, and walk. A crowd of us in the street on Sunday, ain't nothing about not car or nothing like that.

EM: Where you get your paper from, your pencils and paper? Where y'all get your books from, or what kind did you have?

AC: We had some uh, Mrs. Harris used to bring us some, I don't know where she got it from, she bring us some, it weren't like the stuff you use now.

EM: Tell me about the white children when y'all lived on these farms, did they go to school everyday, or did they have to stay and work too?

AC: No, them white children didn't have to see no work, no we did the work, that went, we get up soon in the morning, and pick on that tobacco, and til we get back from that school. Them white children didn't stop.

EM: Okay, did they help y'all....

AC: Not until the later years, you know.

EM: Alright, did they help y'all with your lesson and stuff like that?

AC: No. They didn't want us learning nothing.

EM: I agree that.

AC: You come into contact with some of them now, you know. Sometimes, you'll find some of them, they don't care whether you learn nothing.

EM: No.

AC: No, they don't want you to learn nothing

EM: I want you to tell me a lot about Mr. Charlie Bell, because, he was your friend....

AC: My cousin...

EM: Oh, he was your cousin too. Uh, he taught himself how to be a carpenter?

AC: Yeah. He learned himself.

EM: But nobody, didn't know white man have to teach him?

AC: He learned himself, and then he worked for them white folks, he tell .....???? when he got out from under his daddy, he done got out from under him, he tended his own business. Sure he did.

EM: Was anymore of his brothers, anybody else around here was carpenters with him?

AC: Uh...

EM: Because I know he used to carpenter in Oxford everywhere.

AC: He sure did. Sam Day.

EM: Okay.

AC: You know Sam Day...

EM: Is he related to the Days..

AC: Yeah, that's right. He was related to the Days.

EM: But did this Sam Day go to, what church did he go to? Oak grove, Olive Grove?

AC: Oak Grove, Olive Grove was his church.

EM: Did he go to Bryan's Hill School?

AC: Yeah.

EM: They, all the Days, live and went to Bryan's Hill School.

AC: That's right, that's right.

EM: you ever seen Bryan's Hill School, before it was torn down?

AC: Yeah, I been there, before it tore down.

EM: You went to Bryan's Hill School?

AC: No, I didn't go there for school.

EM: But you been down there?

AC: Uh huh, my children went there, when we live with Henry, we moved to Henry Day's, when we left over here at uh, on Raleigh Road, we moved to Henry Day?

EM: Was he a white man too?

AC: No, you know Henry Day.

EM: Yeah.

AC: I know you know Henry Day. No, he's a black man.

EM: How long did y'all stay with him?

AC: Stayed with him about three, you couldn't live with Henry Day, .....

EM: Why what did...

AC: He was all right anyway, but he knows everything.

EM: Okay, you couldn't tell him nothing.

AC: No.

EM: And when a person know everything, he think he better than you.

AC: Tried, didn't know how to farm, he didn't know how to, that's all he ever did, he knew how to farm.

EM: And where did y'all get your grease from? Play with your hair, tell me about that.

AC: We used to go to the woods, it was a kind of weed, that you bought.

EM: Try to tell me.

AC: It was a heart, you call it a heart.

**[END OF SIDE A]**

**[BEGIN SIDE B]**

EM: Okay, where did y'all get your grease from and stuff to put on your hands and hair, what did you do, how did you fix it, what happened?

AC: My mom used to go to the woods, and she'd carry us with her, and get this, I reckon you seen it, you know what it was, it's a leaf look like a heart, shaped just like a heart, just green, green, and she'd take that and carry it to the house and stir it, and stew it up.....

EM: Like they do .....???????

AC: Yeah.

EM: Roots and stuff?

AC :Yeah, I would say just like you going to cook some salad.

EM: Salad, Uh-huh.

AC: She would stir it up, and then she would put uh lard in it, you know, always had lard, 'cause my daddy always raised hogs. Put a little lard in it, and that was our hair grease.

EM: Did it work real good?

AC: Yeah, it did good, I wish I could find some now.

EM: Oh yeah.

AC: 'Can't find any, but you can get it in an old plant vase, she used to....

EM: Like pope salad, it always come up around toilets and stuff like that. You ate a lot of pope salad ain't you?

AC: Yes, it was good too, I didn't know but it was good.

EM: Yeah, my grandma pack all the onions in it.

AC: Yeah, she go and get.....???????? and we go to the woods and get the bud out of the pine, you know...

EM: Pine tree?

AC: Uh huh, that bud down in that, in that pine tree, and she rake that out of the bud, didn't want that heavy part, get them buds out there and carry them to the house, and that what, that was our medicine.

EM: Did she boil it or just give it to you?

AC: No, she just boiled it, that was our medicine.

EM: She boiled it?

AC: Yeah. Nothing about going to no store, or store.....??????????????

EM: And what for cuts, what did you do when you cut yourself?

AC: Get some lamp oil, and put it on there.

EM: And what did you use soot for?

AC: To keep you from bleeding.

EM: Soot to keep you from bleeding?

AC: Yeah. Yeah, you bleeding you can take that stuff and put it, and take that grease and put it there and pack it full of soot, I mean...

EM: Well, you could soot, fatback meat and cure anything.

AC: Yeah, yeah, yeah, you grease anything you got you used it.

EM: And fatback meat will work, you stick a nail...

AC: Yeah, I used that...

EM: Fatback meat would stomp your toe or anything, wouldn't it?

AC: Yeah, and put a little lamp oil in that thing, and we went about our business too, didn't know nothing about no doctor, and I been sitting here 85 years...

EM: You got 85 more to go, come on, let's go some more. Alright, who made the shoes, who knew how to make the shoes in the community?

AC: Well, my daddy kept ours up.

EM: How did he, what did he, what did he, cut from....

AC: He had an old uh, Lord have mercy...

EM: Try to tell me what it is, 'cause everybody tells me about how they made shoes. Was it like a leather or canvass, which I know you didn't have leather during that time.

AC: No, he had a, a thing he made here....

EM: Oh, he made the piece of equipment that it took to make the shoes? Like it was a blacksmith?

AC: Yeah, that's right, that's what he did.

EM: Okay.

AC: And he set there of a nights, and I was the one that had to help him. He sat there one night, and he, he, I don't know how he fixed it, but he had it fixed where he could

pull the shoe down on that thing, and he hammer there, and he had some water, and he get old shoes, wasn't no good, he didn't throw them away, he cut that, he take that shoe and cut that, cut a sole out of them. Cut a sole out of that shoe, and put it in water. To soften it. And at night, at home at night, he get up and get it one the fire, had a fireplace about like this, and he, got all his tools and everything ready, and I had to take that piece of leather out of there, that thing and wipe it off and pass it to him. And he fixed that shoe, put a sole on that shoe. Alright too, we wore them, wore them to church and everywhere.

EM: Did he have to do it for other people too?

AC: No, no, he didn't do it for, he did it for his family.

EM: Okay, and other people, other blacks, but the white man didn't buy you no shoes?

AC: No, those folks were trying to do the same thing, they asked papa questions and all.

EM: Uh huh, 'cause he was the best, was your father a good carpenter too?

AC: Yeah, he was real good. He learned hisself 'cause see, he had no choice....

EM: Had he ever traveled anywhere, went to Durham, Raleigh, anywhere?

AC: No.

EM: He just stayed, all that world was just right there?

AC: That's right.

EM: How often did you get mail, weren't nobody writing you anyway, was there?

AC: No, ain't nobody writing, I ain't got no mail. And he would get out under the barn shed, that's where most of his work would be.

EM: Who taught him how to make a barn, the flues and stuff like that?

AC: Well, see he, being under slave, he learnt some of this stuff, but he, he said he wouldn't let the white folks know, said he was dumb all the time under those white folks, as they thought, but he was taking this stuff in.

EM: 'Cause if he played smart, they would keep him there?

AC: Yeah...

EM: And make him a slave forever?

AC: Yeah, yeah.....yeah, see they turn him over to Mr. So and so

EM: Uh huh, 'cause he can't learn.

AC: He dumb, and papa said he know how to do it all the time.

EM: And he could make shoes and all, for the girls, for y'all too?

AC: Yeah...

EM: That as good.

AC: And he make leather things, you know that go on the horses, he make them things..

EM: Tell me, now you got to tell me, tell the girls, what did y'all do with the ground bags, your sacks, with your fertilizing, and how you dyed to get the numbers off it, and take you hand, they thing we had sewing machines, and tell me what happened with you hands.

AC: We ain't had no sewing machines.

EM: Now, what do y'all do, how did y'all do? Come on, I know you don't want to think about it, but come on, let's, tell me. Tell me what happened.

AC: Sad times.....???????

EM: It was?

AC: Yeah, Lord Jesus. Used to go to town, and didn't buy much flour and stuff because always raised wheat, and then our bread, and go away to town and got a sack of flour that was a letter, it was a letter on it.....

EM: I never seen it, but they say it was.

AC: It was, I've made a many, me myself, I have my children a many dresses, pretty too, with the letters on it.

EM: Well, what did you do with the letter, tell me about it.

AC: See, way I would do, soak it, see you soak the letter out, but it was a pretty letter...

EM: Was it like a alphabet a A, B, W, something like that?

AC: Sometimes it be a wheat...

EM: Okay, I know what you talking about, it be the design of what's in the bag.

AC: Yeah, and if he bring, if he go to town if he get, bring one this time I save one, bring next time, I save them, see I take both of them and put them together.

EM: Like making a suit.

AC: I got a dress.

EM: And a dress. And then when they get old, you turn the outside in, the outside, and the children didn't notice, when it got old, you didn't throw it way...

AC: No.

EM: You reversed it. You wore the outside then....

AC: Yeah, I would take it, lot of time I take them, if they got that pretty letters on them, I take them and make underclothes of them.

EM: That's right, that what they say.

AC: I did, I did that myself.

EM: And did you have a sewing machine?

AC: Yeah, I had a sewing machine.

EM: You had?

AC: Yeah, I was sewing my things.....?????????

EM: You was bored with a sewing machine weren't you?

AC: What are you talking about, I was the one, mama sit like this, and she would pass it to the sewing machine to me, I would sew it, I'd get so tired of sewing ,couldn't say nothing, better not say nothing about sewing.

EM: But they sewed by their hand, it was tough weren't it?

AC: Yeah, it was. And you get all them boys pants and things, they done worked in them, going to need patching, and she wash them good, boil them in the pot.

EM: Now, these children listening to this tape don't know, now that white man didn't go buy y'all that material.

AC: Didn't buy it.

EM: He didn't go and buy pants for his workers. He didn't go buy shoes for his workers, now you tell 'em...

AC: No, he didn't buy it, he didn't .....

EM: If you take that little sharecropping money, and them bags and rags....you was in trouble, weren't you?

AC: Yes, my dad used to say when he.....??????, lord that was so pitiful.

EM: What would he do?

AC: He would slip him some tobacco up on that barn, 'cause then you had to, you had to tie it then, it wouldn't like...

EM: I know...

AC: He carried to the house, I seen him come to the house, with maybe two bundles under his arm, under his coat, and he sit there at night, and he fix that tobacco, so he could, see so he could twist it, you see him twist it, and he twist him up some tobacco. That's what he did, and he break him off a little piece, he break a piece about like that and put it in his pocket so the man won't see that.

EM: No dentist no doctor?

AC: No nothing.

EM: You fall and hurt your knee, or break it or whatever, y'all had to patch it.

AC: My daddy used to pull a lot of people.....

EM: by the pliers?

AC: With the pliers, now that was something....

EM: You didn't thought about that!

AC: And you better not wiggle....!

EM: ...You and I friends, go on and tell it. You enjoy it. And pulling your teeth, with nothing to kill....

AC: Wouldn't kill nothing...

EM: And whoop you .....

AC: Whoop you for crying, I said Lord, Jesus.

EM: There had to be another way.

AC: I said to myself, nobody didn't hear this but me and the Lord...

EM: Uh huh..

AC: Nobody hear this!

EM: It didn't get no better did it? You eighty six, and you still ain't free.

AC: That's the truth.

EM: You ain't free today.

AC: Sure ain't free.

EM: This is ninety-five.

AC: Still ain't free. Lord I tell people.....????????? but God knows that is the truth, what I told you is the truth, Lord knows Jesus, I've been through something.

EM: And he used to make y'all, tell the children, used to make y'all little toys.

AC: Yeah...

EM: Had to make it by hand. Tell me how smart, they think black people dumb, your little scooters, your little bicy, your little things you ride on.....

AC: That's the truth, and you better not break them either

EM: And children didn't know that your parents made those things?

AC: No, they didn't know.

EM: Made you wagons?

AC: Yeah, .....????????? Sure did do it, sure did do it. Sure did do it. Lord have mercy, sometimes I get.....????????????? and sometimes I hear people say, make me complain sometime I say, see, you complain, be thankful.

EM: Yeah.

AC: And I say that about myself once in a while. I'm just, Mr. McCoy, I ain't got nothing, but some junk, Mr. McCoy, I'm going to tell you this is I don't ever speak no more, I'm just as thankful of this, as if it was gold.

EM: This is gold ain't it?

AC: This is paid for, and it's mine.

EM: And you have it?

AC: That's the truth.

EM: And you can tack anything you want on this wall?

AC: Anything, take anything down, or do it just like, but it has always been....

EM: 'cause it's been so many years that you couldn't...uh, couldn't do it.

AC: Couldn't do it, couldn't do it, Lord, couldn't do it.

EM: I know, it was tough, weren't it?

AC: Lord, have mercy.

EM: A whole lot of praying, weren't it?

AC: Lord yes, Lord, a whole lot of praying, too.

EM: I just want to let people know, that's listening to this tape that Mrs. Annie Bell Cheatham, she was awarded the gold star award, at Belltown Creek Church, because for her outstanding and her, for her missionary, and the mission she done to her church. She's the most outstanding missionary and lady in her church for 1995, and she was, she got the gold award, and she deserved the whole thing, Mrs. Cheatham and I, I guess you wonder why we having so much fun, I met Mrs. Cheatham in 1974, when I went into the NAACP when I moved back to Oxford, Mrs. Cheatham was the secretary, and we, and Mrs. Cheatham would tell us about when so and so, when so and so, and we, I asked Mrs. Cheatham, Mrs. Cheatham, I said, how long you been in NAACP, she would say ever since Mrs. Lester was secretary, I was assistant secretary. So I said, Mrs. Cheatham, how long that is, she said I don't know, you ask somebody else, Mrs. Cheatham knew, but she didn't want me to know she had been in NAACP that long. So, Mrs. Cheatham started NAACP, we guessing, around 1954, she started out, she was down at Bell Town, the went to Creedmoor, and they came back to Oxford, and we, we got awarded together,

Mrs. Cheatham and I, for twelve years serving under the previous administration that we served, and we been dealing with it, we been carrying on our shoulder ever since we got in it, and we took it serious, Mrs. Cheatham is a serious person. She be at meetings on time, she always dress like my mother, she don't go out of the house, if she don't have a hat, and a scarf and be dressed, that mean if she go to the grocery store. Now, I'm might get back to talk to Mrs. Cheatham again, I hope, but we having so much fun, but I just want to let you know that Mrs. Cheatham and I, we are friends, more than friends, we can talk about things, and we won't hurt, and she treats me like a son or whatever, I, I'm just as much a son as there is anybody else, 'cause when she, she just feels that way, and she can talk about anything, and she's truthful, and a loving lady, and I won't find a better person to work with, than Mrs. Cheatham, she's a church-going lady, and she's serious. What she do, she's serious about. She don't play. If she got to be in an organization, you got to put her to work, or she's not going to join. I, I don't join an organization just to say I'm in one. I'm like Mrs. Cheatham, if I'm going to be in an organization, I'm going to work, if I can't work, there is no need in even being in it. And I'm.... So, Mrs. Cheatham, we'll move on now, and let's talk about your kids, when they start going home, going away.....oh, no we just getting started ,tell me about your children when they started going away up north, and come on, let's go.

AC: Uh, my oldest daughter was the first one that went up there.

EM: Uh huh, where did she go?

AC: She finished school up here....

EM: At Mary Potter? Uh huh.

AC: She finished school at Mary Potter, and my oldest brother lived in Buffalo, NY, and she went up there, he wanted, I wasn't able to send her to college, .....????????? when she finished high school, my brother, my oldest brother, Augustus Williams, he came here, after he came out of the army, he come, he was living in Richmond, after he come out of the army, he come home, and he got, he took her and carried her with him to Buffalo. And he sent her to college in Buffalo.

EM: That was nice. She finished through four years of college?

AC: Yes sir.

EM: That was very, and that was the oldest girl?

AC: Yes, that's the oldest one.

EM: Now, what was the next one that left going to Buffalo?

AC: That was Dorothy May.

EM: Was she next to her? Or it was a boy in between?

AC: It was a boy in between her and uh, uh, Clyde Cheatham, Jr.

EM: So, he stayed home with y'all.....

AC: He had to go to the army, he went to the army.

EM: He went to service?

AC: Yes..

EM: And so that daughter went on to Massachusetts, Boston, while, Buffalo, while this son was your, oldest son, in service?

AC: That's right.

EM: Okay, how, what did she do? Did she stay, or she still there?

AC: Oh, she's still there, she finished college in Buffalo.

EM: This one did too, the second one too?

AC: No, not the second one, you mean who is the second one, you talking about the second one now?

EM: Yeah.

AC: Well, she went to Buffalo, but she carried two children with her.

EM: Okay, okay.

AC: And, husband wasn't worth five cents.

EM: Okay, so she did right?

AC: Yeah, she did right, she went on to Buffalo and got her a job, and so she's working, and one of her boys, that one right there, he went to Army in Buffalo, and so he's out now.

EM: So, she did real good with those two in Buffalo?

AC: Yeah, did real good.

EM: Now, what did your son do that came out the service, after he got out of the service, what did he do?

AC: He, he worked in some kind of plant there in Buffalo, I can't...

EM: Oh, he went to Buffalo too?

AC: Yeah.

EM: But, he didn't even come back to Oxford?

AC: No.

EM: When he got out of service, he knew where he was going. Okay, he went on to Buffalo?

AC: Yeah, he went to Buffalo.

EM: So, that means you got three in Buffalo, two girls and a boy?

AC: That's right.

EM: Now, which ones' next, another boy or another girl?

AC: Now, it was another girl.

EM: That went to Buffalo too?

AC: Uh huh.

EM: And how did she do, was she married?

AC: No, let me see now, let me get that right now, got to figure, I had two boys and one girl in Buffalo, .....?????? and then she got a baby girl up there, no, she, she got a job, she's working, but the baby girl is working, but them other two, they working too...

EM: I understand.

AC: But, all of them is working..

EM: And what you are saying is, being honest, and that's the way, when I came along, everybody knew when school was out, you had to work in the tobacco field for nothing, or you'd leave home....

AC: ...and go to work...

EM: Go to school, get what you can, and leave, go north, and get an education, send money back to help your parents, and help your other sisters and brothers, and that really helped you, didn't it?

AC: Yeah...

EM: They was off of you, they didn't have to run to you for things, 'cause they was too far....

AC: That's the truth...

EM: And it made them a better parent.

AC: That's true, that's true.

EM: And your brother saw to it?

AC: That's right.

EM: And he was a daddy?

AC : Yeah, he was a daddy...

EM: And the momma for them?

AC: Yes, he was.

EM: That was good.

AC: He sure was. His wife was just as...you would have thought they were her children.

EM: Are they still living?

AC: Yes, the children are living ,but he's dead.

EM: He is?

AC: Uh huh.

EM: But the mother is still?

AC: Yeah.

EM: That's nice, she was a good sister in law, weren't she?

AC: Yes sir, yes sir-e.

EM: That was nice.

AC: When she, come in and got her, my daughter, I was just as perfectly satisfied as anything in the world.

EM: That's good, that made you feel good.

AC: .....?????? told me when she left here, said Mrs. Cheatham, said uh, she finished school over here, you know, and she said, your daughter is going always do good 'cause she's a nice person. I said I think I know.....?????? I said, well, I appreciate that, I said.....??????

EM: Uh huh, that's right.

AC: Now she was raised right, I said now I can't tell you what she going to do, I said but she was raised right.

EM: That's right. Now, all your children went to school at Bell Town?

AC: Right.

EM: You didn't have nobody go to blackground school?

AC: No, didn't have no children go to blackground school.

EM: 'Cause y'all had moved?

AC: Right. I went to blackground school, but they didn't.

EM: When did you, how did you stop the wind from blowing in, y'all use paper, or what did you use.

AC: We use anything we could get. 'Cause you know then state didn't...

EM: Yeah, all the state did was pay for the teacher, and that weren't much.

AC: And some.....???????????? done throwed it away.

EM: Uh huh.

AC: Has old books we got from the white school, and they was.....

EM: Why did, really, why did they call it blackground? Was the ground black, or that was just a name?

AC: Well, it was black ground, right in there, it was blackground, that was the name, down in there, .....????????? blackground. Well, that's the name, it's blackground.

EM: No doubt about that.

AC: That's right....

EM: I heard it was too.

AC: Yeah, yeah.

EM: But, you know, Mrs. Cheatham; uh, Bell Town, from my research, had a lot of slaveries out there.

AC: Law, yes.

EM: In Bell, there was a lot of slaves in Bell Town. And from Bell Town down to, to the Butner exit, and then, went from Butner back to, you know Berea covet, and went back then, 'cause I been tracing research, it was some going fifteen, like going to Creedmoor, and Hester, but it wasn't as much, but once it got to Stem, it went, it started going the other way.

AC: That's the truth.

EM: But, did you ever, Mr. Gruffy Mayhoe, did you ever hear about him and his family?

AC: Gruffy Mayhoe?

EM: Uh uh, they was slaves out there, it was way back in 1800. Uh, did you ever hear of Carolina Bell?

AC: Yeah, that my folks.

EM: Who? Carolina Bell was a slave, that's how Bell Town got it's name.

AC: Yeah....

EM: You remember her?

AC: No, I don't remember her.

EM: You remember Mrs. Bell?

AC: Yeah, I remember her name and all, she was a little bitty woman.

EM: Okay, now, you can help me with this, I did a research on it, and this Mrs. Bell, is too young, for to be his wife, so, evidently she had to be the second or third wife. Because, there were, in the research, there were grading rows, like in a tractor, and so you knew that wouldn't, couldn't have been the first wife, 'cause he was born way back in 1800, so she could have been the second or third wife, because I read about her, she's about your age, am I right, she was, I mean she was older than you, but you knew her real good, because this was in fifty something.

AC: That was my momma's people, she was some of my momma's people.

EM: Your mother was a what?

AC: My momma was a Bell.

EM: Your mother was a Bell?

AC: My mother was a Bell, Charlie Bell's sister.

EM: Okay, your mother was Charlie Bell's sister?

AC: Yeah.

EM: Oh, okay.

AC: So, all the Bells is relation to me. Jeanie Bell, Charlie Bell.....

EM: Was any Bells, was all of them there, because I don't know about no Bells in the county but there? Was there other Bells, did your mother have other relatives named Bells in this county, in this area?

AC: So far, just, so far....

EM: Yeah, because we don't have nobodies Bells but white. And we don't have no black Bells, but y'all family in this county.

AC: Uh huh, uh, Gus Bell....

EM: Who was he?

AC: That was my momma's brother. Gus Bell.

EM: But all of them came from Bell Town?

AC: Yeah...

EM: Okay, that's when, so your, on your mother's side came out of slavery, right there in Bell Town?

AC: Yeah, Bell Town.

EM: Yeah, they did, that's where their slavery was.

AC: Yeah...

EM: Right there in Bell Town, but Mr. Cheatham, Mr. Clyde, his family was, was down at the Flatwood and Clay Station?

AC: Yeah.

EM: That was where he came from?

AC: Uh huh.

EM: Okay.

AC: Now, he was, he was raised in uh, he was born in, in Henderson.

EM: Uh huh, 'cause what the church name he's is affiliated with?

AC: Red Bud.

EM: Red Bud, so that, uh huh, so that mean he was, he came from out there in Henderson, he was born in Henderson, but he came, his family moved to Granville County?

AC: Right.

EM: Okay, Mrs. Cheatham, I've enjoyed you today, and we've had a good time, we laughed and talked about the old, hard times we had, and the good time, and the bad time, but we still made it, and we going to make it some more, and you'se a good citizen of Granville country, and always enjoy you, and I always come by and holler at you.....

AC: You sure do.

EM: Because we can always find something to talk about.

AC: That's the truth.

EM: And so, I appreciate you spending your time with me today, and another day we going to get back and start, we didn't finish, we didn't get started today, we got another two hours to go.....

AC: You go somewhere else!

EM: But, I appreciate it, and I thank you for setting down and having the time to give to me and everything, okay.

**[END OF SIDE B]**