

Uncorrected Transcript of
Interviews
with

MARTHA COOLEY
25 APRIL 1995

by James Eddie McCoy, Jr.

Transcribed by Wesley S. White

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

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MARTHA COOLEY
25 APRIL 1995

JAMES EDDIE McCOY:1995, I'm James Eddie McCoy, I'm at 432 Kingsburg Street, time is 7 pm, I'm visiting with Mrs. Martha Cooley.

MARTHA COOLEY: My stepmother died and I had to uh, start to uh taking care of the house, I didn't even know how to make a biscuit, but I had to start out that young.

EM: How old were you when you were doing that?

MC: I think I was about eleven. Something like that.

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EM: What age when you died, you was what?

MC: Well my mother died when I was a tiny baby, but my daddy married again, see, my mother was a Burwell from Warren County, she was kin to the uh, that's why I asked did you know Freddie Hargrove. They are related to me, Freddie Hargrove and I, we are related. And she uh, my father married her in Warren County. She wasn't.....

EM: Was she your stepmother?

MC: No, she was my mother. Martha Burwell was my mother.

EM: Okay, and then, what happened to your, then your father got married again?

MC: Well, yes, years and years and years come on by, probably, I think Papa didn't marry I don't reckon until, probably five or six maybe more years than that, quite a while. Then he married Heddie Meadows.

EM: She was your stepmother?

MC: Yeah. She was, she was real stepmother, she was just like my mother to me.

EM: And that's when you started, you had to work for your father? Keep things clean and wash 'em.....

MC: Yeah, yeah, well, yes, I had to do that. I had to keep house and cook too, and working in the tobacco.....??????????

EM: You grew up real fast then.

MC: Uh huh.

EM: By taking on those responsibilities.

MC: Yeah, I did.

EM: Well, it made you be responsible.

MC: Yeah, I was responsible.

EM: It made you be, you know, you was an individual that wanted to do for yourself.

MC: And uh see, they'd be working in the field, and I'd have to have dinner ready, and all that stuff. Always farming, my dad was a farmer.

EM: And then breakfast in the morning?

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MC: Yeah, I had to get them a good breakfast, oh, sure.

EM: And you was what? Twelve years old?

MC: I was a little over twelve then, I was about maybe thirteen, I, no, I hadn't got to thirteen, I think I was around but twelve years old I had to get up and cook them breakfast, but I ain't never been a sleepy head.

EM: Well, responsibility, that's what you...

MC: yeah, yeah. And I get up and cook breakfast, and help hang the leaves and then come back to the house and cook the dinner.

EM: Who milked the cow, and churned and all that?

MC: Well, uh, Severn....????? Papa's sister's children, you know uncle Herman Washington, and they both died early, Annie died with that first flu. I had that first flu that came in and around. That flu that came.....

EM: What they call 'em, yellow jam.....

MC: No, yellow is from the flu is different, this was the flu.

EM: And what it killed a lot of people?

MC: Yes sir. And then, when uncle Johnny was married, Aunt Liza was dead then, and I had to, I was sick then, I couldn't do nothing.

EM: 'Cause you had the flu?

MC: Yeah.

EM: Did anybody else, your others sisters and brothers catch it?

MC: I didn't have no sisters and brothers....I had a little sister, but she was older than me, but she died, she never did get to be a big girl, she died as a baby.

EM: I want you to tell me your name, but I want you to tell me your maiden name in it too.

MC: Bridges.

EM: Now you say it, Martha.

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MC: Martha Ethel Bridges.

EM: Cooley.

MC: Cooley.

EM: What year was you born?

MC: 1909.

EM: How old are you now?

MC: 85.

EM: Okay, you stayed here with your daughter and still carried on responsibilities?

MC: Yeah, I help out, she gets the, she's the head of the house, but you know, I'm under there, but still, I'm the head too. I'm momma. I just am momma. [laughing]

EM: You ain't going to loose yourno.

MC: But uh, you know, in between that time, I had another stepmother, papa married twice.

EM: He did?

MC: My daddy married three times.

EM: Uh huh.

MC: But my mother died, then he married momma Hedio, Hedio Meadows.

EM: Where was she from, granville....

MC: She was over in, near uh, wait a minute, and I'll tell you in a minute. She was over there, uh, I'll say in the, she wasn't in the Hill community, but she was almost in the Brian Hill community.

EM: Ok, I know where, Cinnamon grove.

MC: Yeah, over in there, that's right.

EM: She was Meadows?

MC: Yeah. Mrs. Hedio Meadows.

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EM: Ok, who's the next one?

MC: That was my stepmother. The next one was Mrs. Betsie McChan. You knew Betsie McChan, that????????? my mother was named Martha Burwell, that was my mother.

EM: Who was the third one in mind?

MC: Betsie McChan. Willie Lee McChan's momma.

EM: Really? How long did they stay there?

MC: He was probably was married to Mrs. Betsie about, I don't know, but I'm going to give you a guess about uh, I'll say maybe ten, fifteen years, before she died. Been a little while, I can't tell you exactly.

EM: Okay, uh, were you going to school and keeping house with your father?

MC: When my daddy was living?

EM: Yeah. When your first....

MC: Uh, when I was smaller like that, yeah, I was going to school, I was going to school, come on, fix what I could fix, what I'm supposed to eat. I kept.....??????/

EM: So,uh.....

MC: I was going to blackground school.

EM: What age did you start going to school?

MC: I started going to school, I reckon then we didn't start until we was six years old. Back then folks didn't start school early like they do now, we didn't have no school.

EM: Your school was six months or nine months?

MC: Uh, it wasn't nine months...

EM: It was a sixth month school.

MC: Yeah, way back then.

EM: Okay, and uh, you would clean and when you would come home from school, get things ready and wash....

MC: Yeah.

EM: That was good....

MC: yeah, I took care of the house.

EM: And uh, little things you could do around there, and he help pitch in?

MC: Papa didn't have to help pitch in, 'cause Mari, she was right under me, you know, 'cause I'm older than Mari, but we were children then, older people, let me tell you this before you write itOlder people back then taught children how to do something. They didn't play out in the street all the, out in the yard, and out in the dirt and stuff all the time, they had a job, they get them a job, you get up out of your bed, you make up your bed in the morning. Uh, you get the broom and sweep up the kitchen. And you was big enough then to wash dishes. You see, they started us like that, and uh, from then on you see, I caught on, 'cause I was around in the kitchen when they were cooking, my aunt was cooking,.....????? when momma Hadie died, now all of them was married then, see papa had two sisters, he had, three sisters 'cause Mari's mother was my daddy's sister. And uh

EM: Who else was your daddy's sister?

MC: He didn't, oh my.

EM: How many did he have?

MC: It was so many of them folks, but they all dead....

EM: You don't have to name them.

MC: Adi, and Annie was the ones I knew. And uh, aunt Lila, which was Mari's mother. Now they the ones that I knew.

EM: You talking about Mrs. Mari Eden?

MC: Yeah. That was my, that was my daddy's sister too.

EM: What year did she....

MC: Aunt Lila was. You know when Aunt Lila, when Mari's mother died.

EM: Uh huh, is she, was the Eden's from that community?

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MC: Eden's come from over there around, you know Put Eden, don't you know Veri Eden. You know Veri, don't you know Veri Eden.

EM: I don't think so.

MC: Well, you know the one that married, who did she marry, he married somebody from around here. Who is Veri, not Veri, don't mean Veri Eden. Albert! Did you know Albert Eden? You ought to know Albert.

EM: Yeah.

MC: Well, Albert and Veri were brothers.

EM: Oh, okay.

MC: So Mari married there brother, married Elvis Eden.

EM: Elvis?

MC: Uh huh. And Mari and I went just as sisters, but we wasn't no sisters, we was first cousins, 'cause Mari was a Washington. Herman Washington daughter. And Lila Bridges, she married my daddy's sister. See Papa had raised them out, the both of them died, aunt Lila died like this year, and about less than two years, uncle Herman died. He walked from down there where Mari live, across the creek, over there to???????;s store in the snow, and he could contracted pneumonia and he died.

EM: uh huh. Was it a older guy?

MC: No, uncle Herman wasn't, I mean uncle Herman wasn't old, that old like that. Did you ever know Mr.....??? Washington?

EM: huh uh.

MC: Did you ever know John D. Washington, her son?

EM: I didn't know none of them.

MC: Didn't know none of them.

EM: Hu huh. Tell me about them. Mr. John D. Washington. Was he a friend of your family or what?

MC: John D. Mr. Washington and uncle Herman were brothers. David Washington and Mari's daddy's were brothers. Ethaleen, come down some, you know Ethaleen that married? Who did she marry, she married a woman here, a missionary woman here I

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think that live around here somewhere. Let me see who Ethaleen married. I can't think right now. John.....????? Oh, no, you didn't know none of them, but anyway, so, Uncle Herman married Aunt Lila, and aunt Lila died not long after uncle Herman died. And Papa took Maria and Steven??? and he raised them.

EM: What age were they? Just guessing?

MC: They were children, they were just children. Just going to school.

EM: Five, eight, seven, five and eight?

MC: Something, something like that. I can't tell you exactly.....

EM: But you was older than.....

MC: Yeah, I was older than they are. And uh, you see, Mari get that, you know Mari don't you? You know Mari.

EM: Yeah.

MC: Well, Uncle Herman was her grandfather.

EM: Now, about how far did you have to walk to school, to blackburn?

MC: No where hardly. You know where Greenwood store on that road down there going to Wilton, you know when you leave Oxford and you go on down there, well, you turn this side, go right up side that field there, on the right hand side, on the path, go right on down there in them bushes, and there we were. It was a little one room school.

EM: And what was the name of the...?

MC: Blackground school.

EM: Well, why did they call it blackground?

MC: 'Cause the ground is black, I mean it, it's black, it's just like black mud, you've seen black mud, and I mean that blackground is something too, when it get wet in there.

EM: It, what, it was muddy when it was going in, it would rain, or what was....

MC: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

EM: How did y'all heat it?

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MC: We had a, one of these here, ol long stoves, you know like, like from, from me to this couch here, a stove like that, an ol long stove, you've seen them. And with wood, and stuff, I reckon' they brought a little wood there, but they didn't do like they do now, 'cause if our wood would give out, our boys would go out there in the woods, them big boys, would go out there in the woods and uh, and Alec Allen and all of them would go out there in the woods and cut down, knock knots on them old dead trees, them old dead trees that wouldn't no good. And we'd have fire.

EM: Had to cut the wood?

MC: Yeah, had an ax ,they sure did, break it up and.....

EM: Did any parents bring wood that?

MC: I don't remember them ever bringing no wood, we'd get a little wood every now and then, when the school opened they'd be a little stack of wood that was sitting up, and all like that, but I don't remember them bringing wood, I don't know how we got.....

EM: Didn't **Robert Amis**??? used to bring y'all some wood?

MC: I don't know, he might have, but I don't remember that.

EM: Had to go out there and cut it, you said?

MC: Yeah, the boys cut the wood.

EM: Y'all didn't have bathrooms then did you?

MC: Of course, why yeah, out there in them bushes. That was the bathroom.

EM: That's right. The children don't know do they? What y'all went through.

MC: No, they have a good time. And then walk from that school, blackground school over to the Clay's. Do you know where the Clay's lived? Lived on this, on the right hand side of the road, over there.

EM: Uh huh.

MC: Well, we had to walk over there to that spring and get water, and one, ten, one water buddy, one water buddy.....

EM: About a half a mile?

MC: That's the truth, it was about a half mile, that's right.

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EM: Did all y'all drink out of the same dipper, or each.....

MC: No, we had to have cups, we had cups. We drank out of our own cups.

EM: Had to put names on them, you knew....?

MC: No, you had your cup, you keep your cup with you. In your bookbag. You know, they had book sacks then, put your books in, hang the bookbag right across your shoulder.

EM: And they had to walk all the way to get the water?

MC: Yes sir. And when you get back there, sometime the water is so full of weeds, in the fall, when they are, and the weeds, the seed is coming out of the weeds you know. Had a little.....????? about like that, and you carry that water, and????? we be glad to get out of that little school house. Annabele Chavis, she was glad to get out of that school house, and we'd get back to that house, and we'd have a bucket full, 'cause we was both grown, and then weeds would be all in them seeds, out the, had to skim the seed off the water, to drink the water. And those Dobbie children, those Dobbie children, you know Bettie Lou? I mean, you know, I'll tell you who one of the Dobbie's is you may know him, or you've seen him, maybe you have. Uh, maybe uh, wait just minute, he was Dora. Wait, let me get this name, I won't tell no lies in this.(TAPE SKIPS) Wait a minute, I'm going to tell you who married, one of the Hunts, can't get this thing together. One of them Dobbie men, and he's real nice, and they, she, I thought I was proud when she married....Did you know Robbie Dobbie?

EM: Uh huh.

MC: Well she, Maybelle Allen's niece married Robbie Dobbie's sister, or brother I mean. And do you know he's a nice man. He ain't like them Dobbie's. He ain't like them Dobbie's.

EM: Uh huh, some people always.....

MC: And now he's very intelligent, and uh, Betty Lou's sister came down, she was at our church about uh, last preaching Sunday, and she looks over..(TAPE SKIPS) and she looked nice, and they was out, left, she live in New Jersey, and they came down, I guess for her rest, for her to get her rest away from the city. And they came down, and stayed there too, 'cause they down here with Avery for a little while. Avery Hunt, you know right down there. And they came down here and stayed with Avery, I think, I don't know if they stayed a night, one night, they might have stayed one night with Avery. That was this last preaching Sunday.

EM: That was nice.

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MC: And uh, and those Dobbies, one of these Dobbies. Vate, he would say, we would bring water from the spring, he'd always say, and he wanted more water. Wouldn't one bucket of water for all the children, you know they wouldn't no more water.

EM: How many children, about twenty five?

MC: I don't know how many they was, it was a crowd of them, that little old school house just full. And uh, he'd always say, I want some.....????????? That's the way he'd talk, I want some.....????? and but, they never did have enough water to bring, 'cause we couldn't bring but just one bucket.

EM: Who was the teacher?

MC: I had uh, Miss. Uh....

EM: Gibson?

MC: Mrs. Gibson was one of my teachers, uh, Elsie Cruise. I believe Elsie Cruise was when I was teaching one time. I know Mrs. Gibson and uh,

EM: Mrs. Supreacha Harris?

MC: Yes. They'd be children sitting around, used to lift that old horse up. Them children would throw me, I used to get so tickled, we used to just laugh, it was fun to us, that was so poor, he would drive a buggy, and had an old poor horse, that horse was just as poor as he could be, and Sydney Raglen, and Osborn Bullock, all them big boys....

EM: Uh huh, who else?

MC: Uh, would take that horse would lift him up, you know put the????????? how you get change like that, and lift in up. Lord it was so fun, that's the truth.

EM: And turn him around?

MC: No.....????????? But Sydney Raglin was just as devilish as he could be at school.

EM: But them was good days.

MC: Yes, they was.

EM: And so, y'all had to, did you go back and get some more water, or that one bucket was.....

MC: No, you'd get some more water, you'd get some more water through the day, boys would go, boys would. Annie Belle and I would always go, 'cause we would get out

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there and, we would, sometime we could run through the woods, a little ways in the woods, and find some hawls, sure and used to eat those hawls.

EM: Some what?

MC: Hawls.

EM: What is that?

MC: Don't you know what a Hawl is? I don't know where you been!

EM: Somewhere, I don't know what no Hawl is.

MC: It's Hawl trees.

EM: Oh.

MC: And as a tree grow up, it don't grow up like a big old tree now, but it's a big high tree, and they have little flat black berries look like, not like berry but uh, something like a....

EM: Blackberry or....

MC: No, no, it ain't big like that, it's a small but it's round. And uh, in uh, after the frost bite them, they are good. And we used to just eat them, the real good. They really good.

EM: Must be something once the frost bite them?

MC: Yeah, uh huh. And there was old 'simmon tree, before we got there, the well was up on the hill there, up on the, you come right by the well here, well, right down from the well there, out in the woods at the school, was a 'simmon tree, so all the children just go out and eat 'simmons and those Hawls, we had go good time running through the bushes and getting those things.

EM: Would a hawl fill you up, or it was just?

MC: No, it was just a little fruit thing that we liked. And so, we would get them eating muskidines and have uh, recess time, we were children then, there ain't no children now.

EM: And you could take it, couldn't you?

MC: Huh?

EM: You could take the responsibility during that time?

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MC: Yeah, we could run out there in the woods and play, the teacher was glad for us to get out.

EM: Now, how often would you have recess? Or you just, that was just that lunch period?

MC: No, we'd have, we'd have uh, in the morning we'd have 'bought ten minutes to get outside, and at twelve o'clock we'd have a hour recess, I think it was an hour, I hope I'm not making a mistake. And then in the evening, sometime we didn't have no recess, 'cause you had so many children sometime, we didn't have a recess, but she would let you be excused if you had to be excused.

EM: How did she teach the first grade, second grade, third grade, fourth grade, she start with the first grade first or what?

MC: Well, they worked on the board, maybe she put alphabets on the board for them, when them children didn't know the alphabet. And that, they would have to be up, they just set down and make them write them alphabets and learn them like that, you know.

EM: And while she worked another class.

MC: Yeah, that's right.

EM: But, she kept them busy?

MC: Yeah, she kept them busy, you wouldn't in there talking and laughing either.

EM: She had a lesson plan?

MC: Yes sir.

EM: Had a lesson plan.

MC: Yes she did.

EM: Okay, y'all went by her lesson plan?

MC: Yes sir, or else you would be punished, or she would keep you in, or you either take a switch and hold out your hand, I ain't never got a lick in mine.

EM: By having a lesson plan, she know she had all day, 'cause she had so many kids.

MC: Yeah, yeah.

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EM: That's what lesson plans came from. See, whites didn't have a lesson plan in their day. Because they thought they were so smart they didn't need one. But when I talk to blacks, they always said black teachers had a lesson plan as far as back as I've interviewed. This picture look any like your schools?

MC: No, 'cause our school wasn't but one room. And uh, and two windows. [laughing]

EM: This is a Cadillac. Had what, how many?

MC: We had two windows and one on one side, and one on the other side. But it wasn't dark in there.

EM: You ever seen anything like that, a truck the white children ride on?

MC: No, we never, they were walking too. They were walking, yeah, back then, everybody walked, didn't know what the school bus was. Wasn't no school bus.

EM: Who checked your lesson at night when you came home or keep up with your...?

MC: My aunts would help me with my lesson.

EM: They would? They could read and write?

MC: Yeah, oh yeah, all of them. My daddy could do that. My daddy had a nice handwriting.

EM: Your father was never in slavery?

MC: No.

EM: He's a free black?

MC: Yeah.

EM: What, where did he come from?

MC: Come right around in North Carolina here. But I tell you, yeah, he lived in Warren County a while, and then his home was right here in Vance, in Granville County.

EM: What part of Granville County?

MC: Well, Oxford, down where he living now, down where the house is right now, where I got rented out to.....????????

EM: Down the street?

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MC: No, not this one, I got this one rented out to this other girl, you know her I reckon. But my, the farm house, up there on the farm. Down there by Huff, you know where Huff lives, well you turn that next road right there, and there's Marie's house on this side, and mine on the other side.

EM: Oh, okay, okay, okay. And so um....

MC: And my farm go back that way.

EM: But you never had no slavery in your family, you can remember?

MC: No.

EM: Your mother's side nor your father's side?

MC: I think my grandmother's mother was a slave, or something.

EM: On your mother's side?

MC: No, my grandmother, on my grandmother's side. See, I don't know that much about my mother you see, 'cause you see, she uh, died before I was, I was a baby when she died, so I never got no history from my momma's folks.

EM: Her family? 'Cause the aunts and uncles kind of faded out 'cause you was young?

MC: Yeah, that's right. And them that were living died, and them that are living now, don't know, just like I wouldn't know, I'm sure they don't know.

EM: Was, which school that you think was the oldest? Was Peddleford Road School older than BlackBrown School?

MC: I don't know, I can't tell you that.

EM: Did you ever go up and see Peddleford Road school when you was going to school?

MC: Uh huh.

EM: Why? Didn't you, you didn't have a wagon pass, or you couldn't go that way?

MC: Folks just didn't visit like that. Everybody was kind of in groups.

EM: Okay, what did y'all do on Sundays when you were off?

MC: Go to Sunday school. And go to church.

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EM: Well, who did you play, what did you do?

MC: Go back home and sit down on the grass and play. Play, play, play at home.

EM: Play ball and other things?

MC: No, no no. We better no throw a ball on Sunday.

EM: Okay.

MC: I wouldn't been sitting here down reading, I wouldn't have had nothing to sit on.

EM: What about washing on Sunday?

MC: No sir! Wasn't none of that going on.

EM: Ironing?

MC: Nothing, no sir. That wasn't done.

EM: Cleaning?

MC: No sir, you done that through the week. You took your bath on Saturday, and Saturday night, there wasn't bathing on no Sunday, you do that on Saturday night. And then on Sunday morning you wash your face and hair and everything.

EM: So, you knew what Sunday was going to be by eveybody. 'Cause all the time....

MC: Yeah, we knew that. Everybody was doing the same thing.

EM: And didn't nobody tell you what to do on Sunday, you knew you was going to leave that house?

MC: Yeah, I was going to leave there. Going to Sunday school, if you didn't have, we didn't have service but once a month then, the churches weren't like they are now, and we didn't have, we didn't go to uh, we would could get up and go to.....???????/ and ironing and washing or nothing on Sunday. Nobody, and I mean nobody. When you saw a person, anything you saw somebody that uh, well, I tell you, people separated themselves, everybody weren't mixed up like they are now. Uh, if you was a drunkared, Papa, one might come to the house....(TAPE SKIPS)

EM: Let me aks you this. What church did y'all go to when your church didn't have service?

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MC: We didn't have service but once a Sunday. We just started to have our service twice a Sunday recent, here in recent, recent years.

EM: Where did your other, your minister live? They live in Oxford or come from out of town?

MC: Uh, I reckon Mr. Lyon must have lived there in Oxford somewhere, I don't know for sure, but he wasn't no long ways apart. 'Cause I heard papa say when the preacher used to come through on buggies, horse and buggies you know. So, I'm sure it wasn't far out.

EM: Did he preach somewhere else another Sunday?

MC: No, nowhere, no churches didn't have no two or three services like they do now.

EM: Oh, okay. I heard some people in some areas that have.....

MC: They might somewhere but not....

EM: Their preachers would go one church one Sunday, and another one another one, and he would stay busy all the....

MC: I don't know, but Rev....well, I tell you what, now I just do remember Rev. Lyon and Rev. Davis was the next minister that we had stayed there so long and I know he didn't

EM: Where Rev. Davis from?

MC: From Warren County. (TAPE SKIPS)

EM: He had a nice, how did he get up here from Warren County?

MC: He was up here not long ago. Yeah, he was then, 'cause there wasn't no horses and no, wasn't no cars and things. (TAPE SKIPS) But I don't know, when Rev. Davis started preaching we had, I reckon we had, I reckon we had, he had, must have had an old car then, when.....(TAPE SKIPS) lot of times, preachers would go on horses, have a horse and a buggy. (TAPE SKIPS) they even do that, they come along the train if they live in by the train, and get off at Clay station and somebody meet them, and carry them to the house to spend the night. That's the way that was done.

EM: Did you ever ride the train somewhere?

MC: No, we never ride the train. (TAPE SKIPS) folks weren't visiting like they do now, weren't going places, they was staying at home. They was just staying home back in those years.

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EM: So, on Sunday, on Sundays y'all came home from church, you just, and Sundays that you didn't go, you still could....

MC: It weren't no Sunday I didn't go. I went every Sunday that, if I weren't sick I was there...

EM: They had Sunday school?

MC: Yes sir. Every Sunday.

EM: Every Sunday they had....

MC: Every Sunday. My daddy said they had Sunday school out on Branks Hill in a school, it was a school house. That's why that church was named Bell Town. Our church was named Beltown, got that from Bell Town. The name, Bell, from Bell Town school.

EM: I heard that. And your father, he used to, he was living in that area?

MC: He living where he living right now. That's where he was living, he dead now.

EM: He walk over to Bell Town.

MC: Yeah, what he going to do?

EM: No, Mrs. Cooley, you know how far that is?

MC: Shoot, that's the way he got there, and everybody else was walking. I know when they didn't have no cars.

EM: You know how far Bell Town to where y'all live?

MC: Down home?

EM: Yeah. 'Bout five or six miles.

MC: It ain't that far, I reckon.

EM: They must have went through the woods.

MC: When they could go through, right.

EM: Well, people walked all the time.

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MC: Everybody was walking.

EM: People was very dedicated. You had a good father didn't you?

MC: Oh, yes I did.

EM: And his rules was rules, and it wasn't...it was..

MC: Yeah, all them old folks rules was rules then. They weren't playing. They tell me something, and I go, if I go, some near Louis's house, near Louis's all house, and a little older and I could play with them, 'cause they was out there, they would let me do that, they weren't little but they was older than me, but, I could play with them, 'cause three minutes wouldn't no time to me.

EM: It would go by so fast.

MC: Uh huh. I tell you one thing, I be back home by thirty, before the thirty minutes was out. 'Cause if I weren't there, I know what I would get.

EM: Darl couldn't catch you, could it, where you from?

MC: No, sir, god. Uh huh. That dark wouldn't catch any, nobody, no girls wanted dark. Unless it was somebody that we didn't follow that didn't mingle with at that time. People separated themselves then, from some people.

EM: Okay, let's talk about your husband. Where did he come from?

MC: He came around our neighborhood.

EM: The Cooley's?

MC: Uh huh.

EM: Uh, could his family read and write, mother and father?

MC: Uh huh.

EM: Uh, were they free blacks? Did they own their own land?

MC: Uh huh.

JM :They did?

MC: Uh huh.

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EM: You knew, same some of his sisters and brothers.

MC: Well, two sisters, got three sisters living now. Patty Harris, she live in New Jersey. Been living there for a long time. (TAPE SKIPS) is dead, Lilian is in the hospital up here, and Eva May is in the hospital, which is Al Fonz's mother, Al Fonz's mother is Eva May. You know Al Fonz?

EM: Yeah.

MC: His mother is in the home over here. And uh, Lilia, she is in the other home over here, away at the hospital. You know, over there in that home. She's over there.

EM: Did your husband have a big family?

MC: It was thirteen of them, fourteen or so. I think it was thirteen.

EM: Did y'all go to the same church and school, when y'all always knew each other?

MC: Went to the same school, but we didn't go all, yeah, we, no we didn't all the time to the same church. I think uh, somebody....(TAPE SKIPS)

EM: Mrs. Cooley. I just thought about it. It wasn't far. Because I know where the road, right up there at the fire station, over to Bryant's Hill. That road was about three miles. Yeah, you are right. But it wasn't nothing but a wagon path. It wasn't nothing that you could bring.....

MC: No, it wasn't nothing, but uh, I may have been, hey that girl....it ain't been too long. Yeah, we walked. Everybody, it wasn't one person, everybody was walking.

EM: Uh huh. What about your father provide for y'all. He was a good provider?

MC: Oh yes. My Lord he was.

JM: Y'all didn't have to go to the store for nothing but what? Coffee and sugar?

MC: Coffee and sugar. We had wheat. Papa raised wheat, corn. We had a good garden. We had plenty of chickens he always had fat hogs, oh the hogs he raised was so fat they went blind. They were so fat, the fat went over their eyes. And uh, we had chickens, we had, always kept two cows. Man, we was.....(TAPE SKIPS)

EM: Uh huh.

MC: Eating wasn't no object.

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EM: Uh huh. That was good. 'Cause a lot of people had a pretty good life, is what everybody else had, you know.

MC: And some didn't though. There's always some, some don't try as much as others, you know. That's always been, like it is today.

EM: How often did y'all get mail?

MC: Everyday.

EM: Mail man came everyday when you was a kid?

MC: Uh huh.

EM: Oh, okay.

MC: Driving a horse and buggy, but he went.

EM: Uh huh. Did y'all ever do any quilt making, who taught you....

MC: Yeah.

EM: How did you learn how.

MC: I just saw my grandmaw make them. They had quiltings.

EM: Your grandmother on whose side?

MC: On my daddy's side.

EM: They had what? Quiltings?

MC: Quiltings.

EM: A bunch of ladies come....

MC: Come in and quilt, and have quilting, and they have freeze ice cream; freeze ice cream to pass around, and they had good times.

EM: And everybody work on their quilt?

MC: Yeah. Quilted out at night. My grandmother, like you make a quilt, you make a quilt, and then you invite the women to come and make a quilt. And they had quilting at night, uh, and had it, where you could hook the ropes or, hook the quilt up in them frames, and the women sit around there quilting and quilt it out.

EM: And just gossiping, talking, have a good time.

MC: Talking, uh huh. And have ice cream to eat. Maybe cake.

EM: Uh huh. What about corn shucking?

MC: Lord have mercy. That was the men's night. They had plenty of food cooked, and they would eat, and they had a good time, just a laughing and going on their at the corn pile and....(TAPE SKIPS.) But they lived, people lived then, they was friendly, they was close, they didn't mind helping each other, do nothing. When one's crop got behind, and he got kind of sick or something, people would....(TAPE SKIPS)

EM: I had Mr. Curtis to tell me that, come from northern Granville, and he said that he had whites that live in the community, and they would do it for everybody.

MC: I'm sure it, I'm sure we would.

EM: He said you didn't have to worry anybody get sick or anything.

MC: No, your crop was saved.

EM: That's what he said.

MC: They work together. People work together then, but now...

EM: They trust each other.

MC: Yeah, but now they done got so educated they don't want to do nothing.

EM: So, part of that messed them up to?

MC: Yeah, that helped. That's part, people used to help each other. Like if I want to have a quilting, I could tell my church members I want to have a quilting and I want y'all to come.(TAPE SKIPS) all them women around there quilt and quilt and quilt....(TAPE SKIPS) I didn't do it, 'cause I wasn't old enough to start to doing that, yeah, but my grandmother used to, on Wednesday nights at the church, walking too. Walking. (TAPE SKIPS) Boy I had to go, and I couldn't show I didn't want to go either.

EM: Yeah, I understand. Did you ever seen a stove like that before?

MC: Oh, yeah, I've seen them. Yeah, that's a range.

EM: A range?

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MC: What you call a range.

EM: What do you mean by that.

MC: That's the name, was the name of it then, back then, they call them a range stove.

EM: What are all of these doors and stuff for, 'cause I don't understand.

MC: Well, that's the bread, you warm your food up in here, and then you cook in this door, that's your firepot right there.

EM: Fire, ok. I didn't know that.

MC: Fire, in the ashes, and I reckon that must be the soot stand, right here, you take your little sut thing and put it in there, and take the soot out of that. That's the sut box right there.

EM: And y'all had to save the soot back then, 'cause y'all used the soot for everything.

MC: No, we didn't save no soot, we saved ashes throw around the garden and these places. But not the soot.

EM: What did you use for remedies when somebody got cut or hurt?

MC: Put a cloth around it, or put some lamp oil on your finger and go on about your business.

EM: What about if you stick a nail in your feet?

MC: Same thing, use a, well, if you rag or something on your hang or something like that, you put a piece of fat meat on it, that help bring it to a head.

EM: Uh huh. How many kids do you have?

MC: Who me?

EM: Uh huh.

MC: Nobody but Thomas and Eudela.

EM: Huh?

MC: Thomas and Eudela.

EM: Uh huh. Which one, who's the oldest?

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MC: Tom. He'll be home Saturday I think. Uh, the group that go with you when you finish school with Eudela, they all, Mrs....Do you know Mrs. Smith in Henderson school teacher? She want all them girls all them children that she taught, when Eudela was in school, she want all of them, I mean in grade school, want all of them at her house Saturday.

EM: That's nice.

MC: They going there and they going to have a party, I think there's going to be about thirty of them I believe.

EM: Did she go to blackground school?

MC: No.

EM: Where did she went to?

MC: She went to, well you know, you know the blackground school, I don't reckon she went to blackground school, I'll have to ask her, I don't think she went to blackground school though, I don't know I can't remember, I don't think she.....

EM: What are these people doing here?

MC: I don't know that I know what they are doing or not.

EM: Uh huh. Killing Hogs.

MC: Killing Hogs, that hog hanging.....????????? dragging him on up there to be picked to death.

EM: And y'all kept everything?

MC: Yes sir. All of that was eat up, except the.....chitlings and all.

EM: Who do, clean, you clean chitlings?

MC: No, I didn't do it then. I helped clean them now.....

EM: Did you ever??????

MC: Yeah, I know how to do it.

EM: It takes so long.

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MC: Yeah, it takes a good while, but you just got to stick to the pump as the old folks say.

EM: Uh huh. How far did you go in school?

MC: I finished grammar school, and started to Mary Potter, but uh, I couldn't go because see, my, at that time, I was, I had stopped and take the house over, 'cause uh, momma got sick and I had never made a biscuit, I learned how to make a biscuit on the silver pot. But I to stop school, I hated it, because see, I was going to school to go to Africa. That's what I always wanted to do.

EM: Well, what was school going to do?

MC: Well, I was going to get a education, get a education before I go over there teach those hethens.

EM: That's what you wanted to do?

MC: Yeah, that was what I was doing. And Mrs. Ransin and all of them told my daddy they would help me, I didn't have no mother, they'd do all they could to help me, 'cause they wanted me to go to. And uh, but my stepmother died, and I had to take care of the house for my daddy. But that knocked me out then, but that was my aim, was to go to Africa. But I was going to school....

EM: What, what is this? Explain this to me.

MC: I don't know whether I can explain it or not.

EM: Yes you can, you look at it, tell me what y'all used to do, what could you do with that?

MC: You wash pots in it, you wash clothes in it, a wash pot over there, that's what we done with them, that's a wash pot. Then you could take the wash pot, another wash pot if you had one, and you could, could, get you one for the, especially for your lard and stuff, and when you kill your hog, you take all that fat off him and uh, off of them intestines and uh, that's a second, that's a second lard you don't mix that with your best lard. But it's nice lard, it's clean and all, but you just don't mix it together. And you take all the lard you cut off from your hams and your shoulders and all the other parts, that firm meat, you uh, you put that in a different pot, and cook it down, and then you got that chitlin, the chitlin lard that come from the. Know how you kill a hog, and the chitlins are covered with fat?

EM: Yeah.

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MC: Take that fat off, that's another, that's lard too, but we didn't mix that lard with the other lard.

EM: You, you have two different.....

MC: You could use that lard for frying, whatever you wanted to, but we always, we just didn't do it that way. Then you take that where you cut off of them shoulders, and the hams, and the backbone and all of that fat, and you cook that up, and that's the white....(TAPE SKIPS).....put that in the can, and you cook with it, make biscuits, and that's just a lard, you don't have to buy none.

EM: What about fish. What do you cook fish in. Which one of the lards could you cook.

MC: In that, in that there where I was telling you about that, that lard where you make the bread in. That other lard was alright to use, it was clean.

EM: Uh huh. And the stick is for the stirring? Bubbles when you.....

MC: No, they stirred it....the stick, they stirred it the crackles, the cracklings is in there. When you cook up, you leave the crackles, you got the cracklings out, and when the lard get dry, it cold, it's cold it's real white and pretty.

EM: But that was the good days, wasn't it?

MC: Uh huh. Sure was. Sure was.

EM: You wouldn't trade them for these would you?

MC: No, I wouldn't need them, but I'll tell you what, I could have the times and people was acting just like they was acting in, and was acting, so you could walk out and wasn't afraid nobody was going to kill you. I like all of that. 'Cause there wasn't no such a thing as a, folks killing folks like they doing now, and doing, talking about everything but the right thing, it wasn't, people just weren't doing that back then. Now you'd hear of it sometime, way away, but it wasn't in your door.

EM: When you got married, where did y'all stay, in that area, did you stay at your mother, or your father. Or you all had as house of your own?

MC: Had a, we went out by ourself.

EM: Uh huh...(TAPE SKIPS) your husband....

MC: I stayed at Papa's some, 'cause Papa still didn't have nobody, we stayed there a while, til he got married to momma Hedio.

EM: Uh huh. When he got married, you were ready to get out of there....

MC:????????? to McCaden.

EM: Who?

MC: To McCaden.

EM: You were glad when you could get out there and somebody else wait on him.

MC: No, huh uh, I was always willing to wait on my daddy, he weren't no....???? My daddy was clean as a whistle. He was always very careful, and when he....but I wasn't glad, but I just wanted to get out after she got there, I wanted to not be in there with her.

EM: I understand. Uh huh. And so, uh, you uh, did y'all uh, how did the teaches grade you, how did they grade kids during that time, what?

MC: I don't hardly know, I'll tell you one thing, we had to learn that, we had to learn what we went over, we didn't go over stuff and have to go back over it again. We had to learn, 'cause she had good switch in there to wear you out with.

EM: A switch?

MC: Yes sir. Switches. Them boys would go out, she'd send them, Ozzie, and Bullock and all of them big boys, go out and get me, go out and get me a switch. And that switch would be right up there, straight long switch about as long as that pole down there, to right up there. And she could handle it good. And she didn't have no, no boys weren't talking all kind of stuff, and acting up, and acting ugly. They was studying. They sure was, if the children would study now, like we study, what little short while we had in school, they'd be some smart children in this world, and learn. And we weren't whipped, I never got a lick in school in my life.

EM: It was cold in that school in the wintertime.

MC: No it wasn't either, it was just as hot in there as it could be.

EM: It was?

MC: Yeah, we had plenty of wood. If the boys go out, go out into the woods knock up an old wood, and some, and we still had a fire, them big boys.

EM: Was that a white man's land the school was on, or you don't know?

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MC: I don't know. Goes up there next to that lodge, they's a lodge hall up there, and the school as right up there at the lodge hall, near the lodge hall. In the blackgrounds.

EM: How long did Mrs. Eades stay with y'all? 'Til she got married and grown too?

MC: Oh yeah, after her momma and daddy died. I mean, after her momma died, and Elvis died, you know they were children when Elvis died. And my daddy took them, and we were all just like sister and brother.

EM: Did she go to blackground school?

MC: Who, Lila?

EM: Uh huh.

MC: She went to, yeah, she went there some, but you know they soon got rid of that school, I don't know, no I don't think Lila ever went there, 'cause that school was out.

EM: What did, what did they replace it with?

MC: I think she went to, she went to Wilton, I guess. Yes, Lila must have went to Wilton to school.

EM: Uh huh.

MC: 'Cause that school was out. I'm sure it was out then. If it weren't, it was almost out.

EM: Uh huh, so uh, what about Christmas, tell me about Christmas time, with the toys and Santa Clause.

MC: Well, when we were children, and that wasn't, that's the children, children weren't looking for things like children look for now, 'cause they didn't get them. They got a little old doll, about as long as your hand, uh, the boys maybe got a little thing look like a little toy sometimes or boys, a little wagon or a little something like that. And, yeah, and some candy, and, the nuts, and the raisins, and then, well they were happy. Children was happy then, they were children then. Uh, they enjoyed that.

EM: But children now won't have anything.

MC: Well, they don't want that junk, they want, you know the children ain't like they was then. They want uh, radios and televisions, and all that kind of stuff.

EM: Well, who made the, who made the wagons and the community, who built the barns.

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MC: The family, the folks, your neighbors.

EM: Who was a good carpenter down there in your area?

MC: I don't remember that, but I'll tell you what, the men would go down and make that barn, and?????? Papa would, he had a barn raising, you call it a barn raising, and uh, got the logs off of the place, and uh, notch them, where he, how he want them to fit in.....

END OF SIDE B