Interview with Delores Twillie Woods and Thelma Woods Nash

July 19, 1995

Transcript of an Interview about Life in the Jim Crow South

Forrest City (Ark.)

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Behind the Veil: Documenting African-American Life in the Jim Crow South

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BEHIND THE VEIL: DOCUMENTING AFRICAN AMERICAN LIFE IN THE JIM CROW SOUTH

INTERVIEW WITH:

DELORES TWILLIE WOODS
AND
THELMA WOODS NASH

FORREST CITY, ARKANSAS
JULY 19, 1995

INTERVIEWED
BY:
MAUSIKI STACEY SCALES
[TAPE 1: Side A]


Mausiki Stacey Scales: Ok.

Thelma Nash: My name is Thelma Woods Nash.

SS: Ok. And if each of you could tell me of your earliest memories growing up.

TN: Well, I grew up like I told you down in Brown's Corner, Arkansas, and down there was mostly big farms, you know, owned by white. And of course, the ( ) lived on these farms. And at that time they did what you call sharecropping where you and your family would have all this land and you would work it, you know, raise cotton and at the end of the year, well the boss man would have what's called settlement. And he would, and maybe you'd clear $25 or $30 and you would do that in November. And then he would turn around maybe and let you have $50 or $60 so you could have some money for Christmas. But me and my father worked on the railroads. His name was Isaiah Ricks and we rented our house there in Brown's Corner from, there was two colored people there that owned some land and we rented from one of them, a house where we lived. But now I would go and chop cotton and pick cotton on these farms.

SS: Do you know how much you were paid?

TN: Thirty-five cents or 50 cents a day. Some paid 35 and some paid 50. And the same thing, you know, and cotton pickking
time, some of them paid 35 cents a hundred for picking and some paid 50. And they had like two months of summer school in the summer. Maybe you would get, maybe three in the fall. Of course, school wasn't decided until all those big farmers had gathered in their crops, you know.

DW: Talking about the black people.

TN: Uh huh. Yeah, the white people would go on to school. They started on time now, but the blacks, that's the way they were scheduled, convenient for the big farmers, see. Because those big farmers had like 300 and 400 and 500 acres of land, you know, and all these people that lived on it if they said for the school not to start it wadn't going to start, you know, if you weren't through.

SS: So the farmers got to tell you when to go to school and the white ones ...

TN: That's right. They were the bosses of the little old town. That's just the way it was.

SS: Could you ever completely finish your settlement.

TN: What you mean?

SS: I mean things for settling up.

TN: Well, he called it settlement, but what really would happen when you go there he called himself having everything figured out and he would give you what he wanted you to have. See? So that's just the way it was. So like I told you. You might clear $25 or $30 and then he might turn around and let you
have $30, or $40, or $50 for Christmas, you know. That's just the way they operated. So it always kept you down. You didn't have anything to get up off of. You know. Because say if you had six or seven children and you cleared $30. Now what did you have? I mean. And you started right back taking up groceries, you know, for your family because you had to, you see, and try to make it until next year. He come out the same way. And there was just people that farmed down there for years and years until they were too old to farm and they didn't have anything because you just couldn't have nothing out of that, you know. So that's just the way it was

SS: What were your experiences?

DW: My experience was a little different from hers, because of the fact that my father was buying his own farm and my great-grandmother which raised my mother cause her mother died at an early age owned their own farm and basically in the community where I was all blacks owned their properties. And I never worked for white people until I was probably 'bout 16 years old. But the experience that I had with my father buying his farm was, see like she was saying the reason they never could get out of debt, because if you weren't a mathematician yourself and kept up with your bills and knew exactly how much money you borrowed from him, how much you paid him, how much you owe, how much the interest was. Ok, that's what my daddy did with his farm and they start making him pay compound interest
and everything. And when they would take money to, you know, to make the crop, ( ) then they would charge him so much and you always never end up with no money left. So what my father and mother finally decided they would do because they was shrewd thinkers.

SS: Where were they?

DW: Right here in St. Francis' County, Colwell, Arkansas, about five miles from Forrest City. They decided that we, and they raised their own corn, and own vegetables, and own hogs, and own cows, and we killed our own meat and we had our own vegetables in the freezer. At that time they made what they called lard and they had that. And so they decided that when we got enough corn in the barn that they had raised to take care of the hogs and things. They had canned enough vegetables, dried enough peas and things for us to have food. And said we not going to take a bit of money this year. We just not going to take no money to make the crop on. So every penny we make the crop will be clear. And so my mother said if we need to buy baking powder or salt or flour, something like that you didn't raise, she would go out and chop by the day, a day and get that 35 cents, what she talking about or 50 cents a day. And that's how we lived. And everybody kept saying my dad was going to lose his farm, but they didn't know what they were doing. So then my daddy said when he went to pay the man for the farm, the man wanted to charge him compounded interest. He said no. You
come down on the interest. I'm not going to do it. And he said that that man sit up there and cried, cause he said he'd never paid for that farm. Which he wouldn't have paid for it if he hadn't been a mathematician. And see right now, when I go to that field I can figure up everything that I pick, how much money they owe me afore I get there. And so then my daddy said he was one of the people that toted the shotguns in order for the black people to be able to vote when they go down to vote, cause they didn't want them to vote.

SS: Carried his shot gun?

DW: Loaded shot gun. So that they wouldn't bother him. And he did that. And then we had, we lived there, white people moved in that neighborhood there and they didn't have a pump when daddy carried them down to get a pump. And so I was there and this little white girl came down and whipped my little baby brother. And when my mama come home, I told my mama. And when that white child came back, my mama said, asked her what did he do it for and he said he just did it because he thought he could get by with it. My mama grabbed that little white child and told his mama and tore his behind all up. And she said that she knew that their daddy was come down there. Boy when his daddy came down there she was ready for that man. But my great-grandmother, the one I'm fixing to tell you about, she whipped two white men, at this mercantile store what I'm talking about cause they were going to ravish her. She took a chair and she
whipped them two white men. She didn't allow them to do it. And then my daddy and his brother they had went to the store, they had an old piece of a car, and a white man came up there and was going to jump on my Uncle Bud. Boy, before he knowed it, my daddy had grabbed that ( ) knife. He had that knife to his throat. They didn't take no mess. I mean they did it. They would do this stuff to you. And what I was telling you about, I hadn't never worked for white people cause we always chopped for the black people, (names of black people in community -- Taylor?) Mr. Rolin Lucas, and Mr. Lowe, and Mr. Ford, and those were some of the, you know, people that had money, had property and my daddy had lots of children, but we all worked. Everybody worked and.

   TN: We did, didn't we.

   DW: But after we had began to get all the, a white guy wanted us to come chop, came for us, and then times were getting a little better then. This was like in the late forties or early fifties. And children had what they called transistor radios. Put these little radios that you place they have little radio to carry. And we went to the field and chopped cotton with this man and he told us, said if ya'll would chop cotton today, I'll let you listen to the radio tomorrow. We didn't say nothing, cause we weren't sassy like the children are today. So we went on and finished chopping that day and we said, dad, we don't want to go back there no more. My daddy didn't never ask
us why, cause he knew if we went to the field we were going to work. Never had no business with our field. And I had a run in with a white guy. Now we picked cotton and he was going to this black lady and I guess he thought nobody didn't know it.

SS: This was a white man?

DW: A white man. And so he didn't want nobody to beat her. She didn't want nobody to beat her either, but this day I had beat her picking cotton. And when he got ready to figure up my cotton he told me owed me x many dollars. I said, no you don't owe me that. You owe me some more, so and so. And I read my figures off to him just like I carried them and he kept arguing and he wanted to make me say yes sir and no sir. And I would not say yes sir and no sir. I can talk to you all day and I'd never say yes and never say no. I can ask you a question, cause it was a big bunch of children of us and we studied that stuff, cause we knew that they wanted you to do it and they would say it to us. So we would just answer the person. We wouldn't have to say yes or no. And they say where and I'd say no, that's not right. I'd say it as a kid. Give me my money. I wasn't going to do it. And so then on after that after he thought I'd got ahead got an old piece of car and I was driving to the field and I was raising my children and then after I got this old piece of car he thought this nigger was getting uppidity. So he told me, can't you get somebody to take care of your children. Take care of your children for what they going
Woods

to pay you for chopping cotton, $5 or $6 a day, and I told him no. So I told him, I said, well, I won't be back tomorrow.

SS: And when was this?

DW: This had to be in the late fifties. In the late fifties, round '57, '58. And then I didn't go back no more. I left there and the Lord blessed me. I left there, and Lonnie said why don't you ( ). So I went up there to Miss Ruth's and I got to work at a pea 'chine a making more money and in the shade. And I had a daughter like 9 or 10 years old. She was a big girl and she looked like she was older and she was making a day just like I was. And so I wouldn't let her go back over there to work for this man. And he found out that we were at Miss Ruth's and when we got to work that morning he was there mad. And he didn't say nothing to me, but he said, girls, why didn't you come to the field. And I took it up. I said cause she wanted to be with her mother. Boy that made him mad and when he left, Miss Ruth was a white lady too. She said Mr. Nichols was mad. He was mad because I hired you both and she put her right along beside me. And when he came in when we started picking cotton he said, well, the cotton is ready to pick and if you want to come you can ride with Forest, this was the one that was going. I said, well, I don't think I'll be coming. I said, but if I come, I'll be in my own car. I didn't know that ( ). My daddy had got a contract to pick somebody else's cotton. I went on down there and carried my brothers,
and hauled them and got money when they harvested the peanut crop. Just did go. That's the way they do. But another thing was the bad here in Forrest City and a lot of people say they don't remember it. There was certain places in Forrest City that you were not allowed after dark. You could go there and work in the neighborhoods, but you had to be out of that area when sundown came. And black women could not wear shorts down town. Forrest City. Right here in Forrest City. Or they would be arrested.

SS: Could the white women wear shorts?

DW: Yeah, the white women could wear them, but the black women couldn't. They would be arrested. They could not wear shorts down town.

SS: Did they give a reason?

DW: Because that was the law. You can't do it.

TN: Naw, you just can't wear it.

DW: You just can't do it. And I mean they had places that if you got served that you had to go down to the side window or the back door.

TN: Or the back door.

DW: Or whatever like that. Hand you something out the back door.

TN: Hand you something out the back door. You know, like I was telling you about I went to that store. I didn't know it. It was right there in Colwell. And it was a ( ) store and I
don't know why I left that store and got there, but I guess it
was for me to have that experience. Because I hadn't had that
experience cause you know you hear people talking about it. And
so in a way I was kind of sheltered cause in like she was
talking about the sharecroppers and that's the reason the people
could never get out. Because they didn't think enough
themselves. They thought if the white man says it it is a law.
So if he says that, if you took a $50 bill, he would say that
you took a $75 or $100 bill. But if you don't get your receipts
and keep up with your receipts then he can tell you he did
anything and most people did it. Cause they say Mr. John, he
going to do right about it. And so they didn't do it and that's
how a lot of people

TN: Cheating them all the time.

DW: Yeah, they were trusting. And a lot of people that
the people left them a time or two. They would go down there,
and, oh, cause they wanted that land. Oh yeah, let old John
have anything he wants and let him have it ( ) and they be
taking they farm away. Cause you know that's how Mr. and Mrs.,
she wasn't a Smith but something else, but her people that lived
there a long time and so they were just letting her husband have
all this stuff. So finally she went down there. She said,
look, if you let him have anything else, you gonna pay for it
cause I'm not paying for it. She meant that she wasn't going to
lose the rest of her land. all this happened to black people.
And they just, you know, talk about different things.

SS: Were there any other rules like the shorts where you couldn't do certain things in Forrest City. Like for blacks.

DW: Yeah, they had to have, we had a separate movie theater and then when they did decide to let them go to Hollis Theater they had to go around the back and go up upstairs. I don't know about any other rules about their clothes.

TN: But they had separate cafes. Some of the cafes you couldn't go in.

DW: Naw, you couldn't go in. They had separate schools. You couldn't go to the schools.

SS: Did they have black owned businesses?

DW: They had a few, a few people when I was coming along and David Bowen had stores. You know, little grocery stores.

TN: Black cabs.

DW: Black cab company.

SS: You remember the name of those places?

DW: Well, we got one of them still in existence. Rose's Cafe when I was coming along.

TN: Rose's Cafe.

DW: We'd call the blue( ) in. Blue ( ) Cafe but I'd call it Rose cause the lady that started it. And then, you know, Freeman's had a

TN: A cafe at first.

DW: A cafe down town, but now they continued to stay in
business. They got a pretty good size business on the west end of town now, Broadway. Freeman's Grocery and they got a grocery and laundromat and they do something with taxes now don't they? And they had the other one and it was some other, they had the pool hall, but I don't know where cause I didn't go in those places. And they had what they called Hole In The Wall. I didn't go there. The Brown Bomber? Was that a black, it was out on 70.

SS: What was the Brown Bomber?

TN: Well, that was a night club. That was owned by blacks. Malone. Percy Malone.

DW: Well, I didn't really know too much about that, but

TN: I didn't either. I didn't go there, but I just know, you know, he was the first one that opened it up.

DW: Yeah, opened it up. Well, the black schools did not have, we did not have a gym or nothing or no place for a football field for the boys to play football, all this time football. And I remember my sister played basketball and that's where they went to practice at the Brown Bomber. I just spoke about it they play basketball and so they did that. And when we first had football at our black schools, when they got ready to play a game, a night game they would use the white, wide field.

What you call them? Football fields. Football fields. And they used to do that and then finally they built a football field over for the black people to have. And you know we did it
like that. And, you know. And all the water fountains. They may be sitting there side by side. One said white and one say colored.

TN: White and the other one colored.

SS: Did you all ever try the white one?

TN: Well, naw.

DW: Well, we had said, you know, we grew up, we grew up in that ( ) and I'm sure that some of the children did. But you know, cause they probably did it for the devil. We just probably didn't think too much about it. Cause the places in, we went to white schools and see i lived in the rural area and so therefore when I came to town probably wasn't really that thirsty for no water anyway so it didn't bother about those white fountains.

SS: Could you go to the police if something did happen?

DW: You could go, but they weren't going to do nothing unless it was a black person. I mean, he wouldn't say a white guy did it. We just got black polices in the late, what, sixties?

TN: Sixties.

DW: Probably sixty, after six, after sixty five, probably '65, '66. Somewhere along in there and not before then. I mean you could call, but they weren't going to really do nothing ( ) unless it was somebody black had done something to you. But the white people weren't going to go do, but some black people had
it good. Because if they worked on Mr. So and So's farm and he come down and say, they could do anything. They could do murder. I'm serious. They could work. That was

TN: Mr. Fleming's and Walker and ... 

DW: So and So, cause I know ( ). Shoot, those folks just got them out and put them on the back of their farm. Nobody didn't mess with them because he belonged to Mr. So and So's farm. That nigger's going to live. And that's Mr. So and So's nigger. Let him out. Whatever he wants.

SS: So people that worked on big people's farms got special privileges?

DW: They got special privileges cause they weren't going to fire him, but Mr. So and So's nigger, you know, cause that's where, well, that was where they was getting their money and so he was paying them. And so they were just, you know, they should do like they do now. They turn their backs when something going on and somebody that they know and so those things were going on in those days, in those times. And I can remember when I first went up to vote. You know, they had long lines. If I got sense enough to come up and vote, I got sense enough to put my ballot in the correct place. Right? And why the guy going to tell me, I say that's ok. I'll put it in.

TN: They wanted to put it in for you.

DW: Yeah, they wanted to take it. Wanted to help you vote.
SS: You mentioned earlier that people carried guns to vote. What happened when they did that?

DW: Ok, well see when they first let, you know, when they first came down from the government to allow us, see, black people haven't always been able to vote. Ok. So when the government first passed the order for me to vote, some little towns like this little town when the black people would go up there to vote, they'd try to keep them from voting. And so in order to be able to vote, say where you going boy. So you didn't want him to mess with you cause see they subject to double team you if you get that warrant so they would carry a gun and they carried a shot gun so they could see that they got their ammunition on and ...

SS: Did they ever have to use it?

DW: My father never said that he had to use it. I don't know no one that had to use it. The only somebody that I know about that actually had to do something with somebody was with my great-grandmother. That was my great-grandmother so that was a long time ago. She had it with these two white men at Colwell ( ). They did something that she didn't like. So she did that and they tell me that my grandmother but I don't know, a lot on my fathers' side, that was on my mothers side. My great-grandmother. My mother's mother died when she was young. So her grandmother raised her and she was still living when I came along. My great-grandmother died when I was 12 years old. So
she was an old woman when she died and my grandmother which was, you know, on my father's side was part Indian and part, he said they were Frenchmen. My parents. My father's side of the family are Frenchmen he said and then my mother, on his daddy's side. And she had a confrontation. My sister was telling me about it. She had to whip a white person, but see, in those days, the reason why I keep saying over and over, if a black person whipped a white person or did something to them they lynched them.

SS: Did they have lynchings here?

DW: Yeah, they had lynchings here.

TN: Yeah, at the court house. They say they've hung a many a person.

DW: They had lynchings here and out at Dawson and going on, going on to McCory we saw one of those, they ain't still up in there, but they had where they lynched people.

SS: Is it still hanging there now?

DW: Well, it was a few years ago, but I don't know now.

SS: And what is it? Was it the noose or the?

TN: Well, it's the thing, you know, that the bottom.

SS: That they hang the ropes on.

DW: Hand the ropes on. Hang them up in the air.

TN: They put it round your neck down on the ground and they pull you up.

DW: Yeah, and then it's a man, I didn't know it, but they
was telling me about it, I guess about two years ago, that they hung out at Humes which is 25 miles from here, but they didn't kill him. But they said it made his eyes budge out.

TN: Come out of your head.

SS: So, and his eyes would budge out?

DW: Yeah.

TN: They had real large eyes. ( ) then the eyes would come out. Something went wrong and it didn't work.

SS: Is he still living?

DW: Well, he was a few years ago, but I don't really know him, but I was telling about him. And then a lot of things that I know I don't know about that went on 'cause I wish some of our older people were here. I just say that I wish some of the people that are older than I am were here cause they know more things than I do because, you know, like I say, I was kind of sheltered by living in a black community and they all land owners.

SS: Would the older people tell stories of things that happened during their time? Do you remember like any of those?

TN: Well, my grandmother was raised in Louisiana and her mother was cooking for this, you know, big plantation. And there they were just as bad as Arkansas or worser, you know. Like when you was working in they houses, you had to go in the back door. You couldn't go in the front door. Now you were good enough to go in there and cook and raise their children,
but you had to go around to the back door to come in. And well, her mother cooked there, you know, until she was grown. And she told about a man that was hung. This man had a wife and his wife begged them not to hang this black man, but, you know, the man, he hadn't done anything. He's innocent. She was pregnant with his child. And he went on, was going to hang him anyway. You know how they all kind of hung together. If they didn't, they would call them names. And when her baby was born, it was this little girl got excited with her eyes would budge out just like this man's did. And she was talking about having a ( ) that they were put in jail because they would stare at this little girl, you know. They didn't want you staring at her. But anytime she got excited, my grandmother said her eyes would budge just like

SS: Her daddy's.

TN: That was the punishment that was put on them for hanging the man. He hadn't done nothing. See, back in those days, white womans have always liked black men.

DW: Uh huh!

TN: And white mens have always liked black women. Don't fool yourself. This come from the beginning when they first come over and they had them in barns. They'd have the womens in a barn. They'd have the mens in a barn. And they would put them together to mate when they got ready. But in the meantime, old boss would be steady be going out there mating, you know,
with the black women. And that's why we're all different colors like we are, see. Well, if she got pregnant then he would sell her to another plantation. You see. That's when they switched them around, you know. That's right.

SS: Did that happen, did that still happen after like when you all were coming up?

TN: Oh, they ain't never stopped going with black women.

SS: Would they force ...

DW: Yes. Yes, the ones that was on their place.

TN: A lot of time, see if a white woman was stuck on you say, and you were on a ( ) then she would tell a lie and say you raped her or you tried to rape her, just because she wanted you. And have you buried in the branches. And you two ( )

DW: That's right.

SS: Do you all remember that happening?

DW: Yeah. You know that's happening right here at St. Francis County and not too long ago. What was that in the sixties when they killed Joblin, cause he was going with a white woman. Sure did. They just did that, you know, all the time. And the only way that a man would get away, now I know there was a man, he ain't been long died, that was going with a white lady. And I guess they found out, because, I guess he liked her and she liked him and when they found out, he had to leave town. So once he got away and got out, you know, they didn't get the opportunity to get him. And I guess he stayed away for about 25
years or so and then he came back. He came back. And my father tells about, they lived in Mississippi before they came out here and his older brother, he got up and he came out here and he found out things were different. And my grandmother, what they did they used to travel in, on trains. And so what she did, she had, I got that trunk now, she had a big old trunk and she put all her stuff in it and she came out here like she going to visit her son, but then when you go back the trunk is empty. So you go back and get some more stuff and she moved all of us on the ( ) and then so she got on out here. And then find her husband. They had a subway. They wasn't just coming, you know. They had a subway. And my father'd take the opposite and go back, then he'd go down in Mississippi and work. Excuse me ( ) but that's just a habit that I had. And after they got old cars and things, they would go down to Mississippi and like they visit somebody and then like twelve or one o'clock in the night when the master sleeps, they loaded them in their car and they would not crank the car up. They would push the car til they got all out of the hearing, where the man could hear it crank up and they'd crank it up. When day come, they'd be over in Arkansas and they'd have it figured out. That's how they got them over here like, I mean a lot of them came over like that and a lot of them came over just like they visiting. And my grandmother tells at one time she had a real young baby and you know when women had real young babies they didn't get out in the
rainy weather, but she said that her husband was gone somewhere and the boss man came out there and told her, girl, you need to go out there and get, her name was Diana, and get the cows out of the cotton, 'cause they done got out. She said, my baby's young. I'm not going out there getting in the cotton. So they were always high strung. They were so quite and naturally they didn't stay there too long after. They had to leave and move because they wasn't going to put up with this impedient nigger, but they was so impedient and they didn't really know how to mess with them so, reason why they got to be one of those that they didn't lynch, because they all had the attitude, but when my daughter went to college she looked up. They did some studying of history, a looking up your name, and when went back and researched it she found out that the Twillies were never slaves. And so I guess that's why they always had the high strung attitude with ( ). But they came, they were Frenchmen and they came over and they got off of this ship and I can't really tell it all, because that Reba she was telling about it. And so my mother said, she said well, I had always figured that out that they were never slaves because the attitude and the way that they did about people and the way that they were able to get by. They knew how to maneuver and how to get by and so that's what they worked, it was two brothers of 'em. So if you run across any Twillies anywhere, they all kin to us.. And we have looked up and I think when my brother got this book it was
like 35 at that time. At that time it was 35 families of the Twillies, you know, in the United States today. They'd be like that. So they were always that way and they just didn't take no stuff. And I guess the always kind of knew how to save a penny if they got a dollar. And so they were just down to, I don't have no ( ) so if it was something they did that they didn't like, they got up and moved, you know, and just left. And so then like they, you know, bought their farm so my father and his brother both were able to buy farms and they adjoined each other. The farms adjoined each other and they do it like that, so.

SS: Were any of those people running away to the north? Would they go all the way that far?

DW: Oh what you mean, from here?

SS: When they would have to leave those places.

DW: Yes. That's where they would go. They would go north. They would go north.

TN: Some of them would go north just like if they in Mississippi and they, my grandmother lived in Mississippi awhile and the way she done, she come over here visiting just like you say yore peoples did. And then this truck would come back over to visit her and they loaded up that night and pushed the truck on past beyond the boss's house and cranked it up. When he got up the next morning, they were gone.

DW: That's the way they would do.
TN: That's the way they did.

DW: And so it wasn't

TN: If you were a good worker, you know, and big family, they didn't want you to move. They wadn't going to let you move.

DW: And they wadn't going to let you move.

TN: See, they always said you owed them something or something with some strings there, you know.

SS: What if they would have caught the person that was trying to get away? What would they have done?

TN: I guess a little horse whip or had them whipped.

DW: Yeah, but see, black people, they were smooth. They had covered their tracks on. They had fixed, the ones that, you know, got away they had to sit down, because see we put our heads together. We could master any situation and they knew exactly how to do it. They know what time the boss went to bed. Where he went to sleep. They know what to do. And you know a lot of these farms and some neighbors if they knew about it, they probably were outside singing and shouting, have a big dance at the time, praising the Lord and keeping a ruckus and the other people would get in the way and they would sing, go down, Moses. They was really wanting them to leave and if the man, and they would be singing. Some of them got away in the day time. They'd be in the cotton fields and if they would sing, if they would tell them "Wade in the Water Children, they
knew that the boss man was on their trail and they would get in the water. They literally would get in the water cause the dogs and the horses couldn't track them. And see they knowed how to do this swimming under water where they couldn't see them or do nothing and they nearly got away. And most of those songs that those people sung in those days when they were out in the fields

TN: Meant something.

SS: They were messages.

DW: They were messages.

DW: They were not just, you know, to be singing, but they didn't know it, because we got this and you know, they would be shouting and they just thought, aw, they down there, done got drunk, you know. They wouldn't be done got drunk. They would be shouting because they know that one of their brothers had got away from that. And they knowed that if they didn't keep up enough noise that distracted everything and so they did it. And they thought everybody was still there and they didn't know everybody wadn't there until they get up to go to the field the next morning. And they in Chicago, St. Louis, or where ever they wanted to go. And see the thing about it and another thing, you say, what if they would catch you? If they crossed and got out of that state it was nothing that they could do with them then. So see if they got over in Arkansas it was no longer their nigger or if they got in St. Louis, you know, if they got over in Louisiana. Any of those places or Alabama. See they
did some in all of those states too.

SS: Were there people that would help them along the way?

TN: Oh yeah. They'd hid you from 'em. Yeah. Until night again when you get out again.

DW: You might be up under a bale of cotton and you could breathe and they'd come there and they'd look everywhere and the dogs can't smell and can't find. And they had on television said you could sprinkle black pepper around and the dog wouldn't know which way to go. And black people had all those signs and it worked for them, but it worked because God was in the plan, cause those were his children. So it did. I imagine you could just sit there, I wish my sister was here cause she know more tales then, she had listened to, you know, that they had told. They had to cause my daddy and mama would tell all of those and it's one that they always told. And see, actually mama was suppose to be there cause that man when he came down there she done whipped his child, but when he left there he had the hair standing up on his head.

TN: Cause she was ready for him, huh?

DW: Mama said she knew he was coming. She had a gun laying right there beside of her. She didn't know what he was going to try to do. But see, he didn't because he knew that his children was wrong cause she told him see, that you kids had no business down at my house whipping my child. So that was it. So that was the law then and they had name that they were bad so
the white people kind of afraid, you know. They didn't mess around with them Twillie boys. And then they lived in a, they may would have tried to do something, but they were living in an all black neighborhood and everybody down there owned their own property. And they weren't like we are now. If anything going on, we don't have no signs. And you talking about people could holler and they could whistle. They could sing. My great-grandmother as old as she was she could holler from her house over to ours over a mile away and I could hear her and know what she was saying. And at that time I had good lungs like she did back and I was young at the time, I'd holler back to her. And I would get on over there. And they had signs that they would put out different color rags, you know, up on stuff

SS: Did that mean something?

DW: Right! That meant something! And they had words that they would use and they meant something and they would know to get together cause somebody's coming up. And so therefore that made the white people afraid to come into the neighborhood because they didn't know what the signs were and they wouldn't know what's going on.

SS: When they would live on these people's places and it came time for them to praise God, would they be able to separate from the...

DW: Oh yeah. They always let them have Sunday off. Here they always had Sunday. Sunday was a day that, you know, you
going to go to church. They even set up churches. Gave them churches.

TN: Gave them land.

DW: Yeah, gave them land ( ). They'd give you some money on a Saturday. Here's $2 where they were paying the preacher, you know. Tell the preacher to go on down there and preach the hell out of those niggers.

DW: And he would tell the preacher what to preach.

TN: That's right.

DW: And that guy on the farm would tell the preacher what to preach, you know. They couldn't go preach that it's wrong to do this, do this. They had to preach...

SS: They would have to preach what the

DW: ...with their mouth, you know, what this guy said. But you knowed they were afraid of ...

SS: And this is when you all were growing up in here?

DW: Naw, this is when we were growing up, not when I was growing up, you know, but when my parents and things were growing up. Not in my day and time. It was different when we, and of course, I don't know if it ever was going on in the community where I was because like I said all those people down in that area for like four or five miles owned their own property and they were kind of big people because in those days in the thirties and the late twenties they had their own T-Model Fords and A-T Fords. They were driving their own cars and
things. And like my great-grandparents, they sold milk and butter and they would bring it down town and eggs and chickens and my great-uncle, well, he raised horses and things for the market. So they did little things to get money other than just the cotton. You see what I'm saying. And they had their own little food orchard, own apples and peaches, and things like that, and they raised their own garden. So they basically raised all the food that they ate.

SS: When they would raise that food did they use signs like the almanac and things like that?

DW: Yeah, most of them did. Most of them did. They had the Mcdonald Almanac, was the main almanac that they used and they planted, and the Cardui calendar and the Cardui Almanac. Those were the things that they used then. And they used that for going fishing. They used that for planting. They used that for pulling teeth and all those things like that.

SS: They followed those signs.

DW: They followed those signs.

SS: Did it work out better when they did this?

TN: Well, it seemed like it did.

DW: Well, I really don't know, cause my mother wasn't a real sign user and one sign that really aggravated me the first time I had a toothache and I wanted to go to the dentist to have my tooth pulled. And my husband was talking about the sign wasn't in the right place and I'm talking about the sign is in
the right place because my tooth is hurting. But you know what?

I guess it was good that he did that, because I don’t know what was wrong with that tooth but it was hurting me so bad until I said, well, Lord, you know my husband won’t take me to the doctor and get back. And I went on telling him about my tooth and do you know that tooth stopped hurting and never hurt any more. So the sign must not have been in the right place. I wasn’t suppose to lose that tooth. That’s what I’m telling you.

So, you know, that was probably the reason the Lord did that for those people and he let it work, because they believed that it worked. It worked.

SS: Did people back then use herbs and different weeds for helping feel better?

DW: Oh yes. My grandfather was called a medicine man. If anything happened, his name was Gus Twillie, anything happened in that community they would go to him, for him to doctor on or fix whatever it was, and he had this medicine man. And the only thing I hate about it, grandpa didn’t tell nobody else, nobody else, what he used and what he did, so none of us don’t know.

SS: So he could get those ( ) together or something.

DW: Yes. He could get it together. Whatever it was he would heal whatever it was they did. I remember one time they kept on telling me, don’t jump off the porch and I jumped off the porch and boy, I gashed that foot wide open. She immediately said to grandpa and told him what it was and he
mixed up something or another for me to have to put on there and put it on. And I tell him all the time, I got grandpa's, you know, ability, knowing how to use herbs and do different things because I do. I use a lot of herbs for a lot of different things. And it be wrong, even with the pneumonia, you know, doctors they go to school and they spend eight to twelve years and my son two years ago had the pneumonia so bad and daughter-in-law called me and told me what it was. I said, girl, it ain't nothing wrong but he got the pneumonia. She said, but Mother, he's been to the doctor. The doctor said it ain't pneumonia. And so she was fixing to carry him back and they kept him up there two days before they found out it was pneumonia. And they were giving him frozen oysters and everything. And I laid up there that night and I pray, Lord, let them send my son home. And when, I called, my daughter got it, they said he could go home. I said, check him out and let him go home. And she was crying and in tears because she knew her husband was going to die and the doctor knew it too. I said, oh, take him home and when you get him home, call me. She called me. She said, mother, I got him home. I came on by the store. I got every kind of juice that I could get. I bought me some onions and I got me some vinegar and I got me some soda and I went on out there. I made him an onion poultice. He couldn't breath. He couldn't hardly do nothing and my mother-in-law, she didn't even know, she said, what. She said she's over the
healer than I am. I made an onion poultice and put it on him, hear, the ones I put, and I gave him the warm juice. And they couldn't get his temperature down and I took that soda and vinegar and I bathed him all over in that soda and vinegar and I bathed him and wrapped his feet. And about, the doctor gave him enough medicine, antibiotics, I believe for four or five days. When that time was up, he went back to the doctor. He liked to have shocked the doctor. He thought he was going to be dead.

SS: Oh, right.

DW: He thought he was going to be dead and then he asked, what did you all do for him and then he said whatever you all did, keep on doing it. See, I can smell pneumonia a mile away. I got that from my daddy. He could do that. And see I was on the telephone and she told me how he was acting. I said, honey, it ain't nothing but the pneumonia. And I knew what to do for it. See that onion poultice, and then he was almost hot a degree, and when I laid that on there it started easing it down and it would go to getting cool. He would ask for it. No, you put it on there hot. And we did that to way over the night and we was tired and sleepy. And the spirit told me, it said get you a hot water bottle, fill it up with hot water, get the hot poultice and put it on and lay the hot water bottle on top of it and that kept him warm. And that's how he, I got his fever down. Any time you got fever, you bathe him off from head to toe with that. They say you can do it with alcohol. They tell
you don't bathe children with alcohol, but we never did it. We always used that soda and vinegar and even for swelling, my son was hot. He got bit with a wasp. When he got to the house, his face was just swolle all up. Just started bathing him in that cold water and you could see the swelling going down. So I use a lot of herbs.

SS: What type of other recipes did they have for sickness?

DW: Ok. They made mullein tea. A lot of teas other people said that they made, we never did. Mullein is a wild, big old wide leaf that grows out. Ok. And they used peach leaves.

TN: Made tea out of them.

DW: Made tea out of that. And then they also bathed them. They used sage. It's for a lot of things. If you know what you put in your dressing. You cook with it. But you can bathe, you know, if you get a swole, a swelling, you bathe that with the sage and you can drink the sage tea. Cherry tea and cherry bark. You use that cherry bark tea for colds and different things and for fevers and stuff. You can bathe off with it. And that cherry is really good for colds.

TN: But now they say they have cherry tablets at the health center.

DW: Yeah, they do. They have the cherry tablets at the health center? I know you can buy that wild cherry cough syrup, but that's a fine thing, that wild cherry vine, and you use that
and a lot of them, they used this sweet gum, for they call it diarrhea now dysentery if they choose. I know those leaves were good for that and they got another. Blackberry root was good for upset stomachs. The blackberries you been eating. You take that root and you eat it and a lot of the things, you know, some of the things, I don't know that all of the people know about it cause I ...

TN: Some of it I don't forgot. We used to have a cow's root and you don't even see that no more.

DW: No more, because I guess we don't know it. And they used.

TN: It just run out I guess.

SS: Who delivered the babies back then?

DW: They had mid-wives. Mid-wives. And they come to your home.

SS: How would they learn how to do deliveries?

DW: They, a lot of them, they mothers did it.

TN: And I guess most of them would help them to learn.

DW: Help them to learn. And too, they had mid-wives books and I had one and I guess when we moved from here or some books got, we were moving out of that house over at the other end of ( ). We were gone and a lot of books got wet and it was really good and it told you, and see, cause I don't know how they learned their ways before that time, before they learned to read and write because you see, people back there like my mother and
her mother they read it, you know. They could read and write and I don't know how far back, but I know those three generations, you know. They could read and write.

TN: They say they would mince the cord like this.

SS: With your fingers?

TN: Uh huh. Back there a long time ago. Said they would mince it. And it's something that comes from the cord and goes to the afterbirth and then it comes back from the afterbirth and goes back to the stomach. When it comes back, that's when they would cut it.

DW: Aw, see. Now she know a lot about it. So they had told her. That's how they learned just like sharing just like they told her.

TN: I hear them saying it and anyway, they would be done measured it off, see, and they'd be standing there with they's scissors and they watch this, whatever this is that leave the afterbirth and come back into the stomach. Well, that's when they would cut.

DW: Then they know it's time to cut it.

TN: Had to, you know, tie it off and cut it.

DW: See? I'm learning something here now. That's just the way it was?

SS: Did they have black doctors back then?

TN: There was some. A few. Every now and then, you know, but mostly, you know, that was on down the line, further, you
know. Because I know this black doctor that was at Madison. What was his name? You remember him.

DW: I didn't remember the doctor, the black doctor in Madison, but they tell me there was a black doctor at Cole. I believe it was Dr. Tine.

TN: Yeah, Dr. Tine.

DW: Yeah, and then, you know, we had Dr. Banks in Forrest City when I was a child. And so doctored out there. And my husband's grandfather was a black doctor, but he was so good. I forgot about that.

SS: What was his name?

DW: His name, oh my goodness. He was a Woods. His name was Woods and I was trying to think...

SS: Was he from the Forrest City area?

DW: He was from St. Francis County. Born and raised in St. Francis County which Forrest City is the town and he was such a good black doctor until he was getting a lot of the white trade. And they hired a man to kill him, but somehow or another, and the man was with him and I guess they was walking, and they say that the man shot him, but I guess the gun, what you call it, kicked. Anyway, it didn't go off and it didn't shoot him and they was crossing the ditch. So then he knew that he was hired to kill. So he left. He had to leave Forrest city, because see, they were going to kill him and he moved out in Oklahoma and that's where he died, out in Oklahoma. What
happened, he got out there and, you know, by being a doctor he had this big ranch and cows and stuff and some how or another they had baled some hay and it was a snake balled in it and I guess they didn't know much snake balls. Maybe at first when it pierced he just thought it was a stick and didn't do much about it. And that poison got in him and they just weren't able to save him. Yeah, that's what happened to him, but that's the reason why he had to leave Forrest City and so that's the reason why he wasn't known too much about in there because he left I guess when his grandson was a little bitty boy. But once I married into that family they told me about it. But his son is still living which is now my father-in-law. He's still living, but his daddy was a doctor. Now he could tell you some, he could tell you some stuff that happened back there, because you see he 80 something years he knows a lot more stuff than I know. He would be back there in the time that you would be wanting to know, you know, in the early 1900's.

SS: Right.

DW: He was raised by his uncle. So I'm sure that his uncle told him a lot of other things that happened, cause a lot of stuff they may not have come in contact with but other people called us to say that their people owned their own property too and they lived on their property. So they didn't come into a lot of things that other people that didn't own their property did, you know.
TN: Of course, them that didn't own their own property they seen hard times.

DW: They suffer. They seen it hard. They tell they couldn't hardly hide themselves. They didn't them enough to make clothes, especially if a lady was expecting and, you know, didn't know how to sew or nothing. Didn't have no clothes. My mother-in-law be talking about how they couldn't hardly hide their nakedness, because, of they didn't have money, clothes. and the master didn't give them none. He didn't care. All he wanted was them, and they wanted black women to have lots of children then so they could work their farm. And like she said, when they lived on these plantations they might pick out one good strong black man and don't care if the women had husbands they didn't want, didn't have children. He had to go around and impregnate all those other women so they could have strong children to work the farms.

SS: How would that affect the family then?

DW: That's the reason why we have such a problem with the black men learning out to stick and stay with their families and take care of them. And see, it's not that they wanted to, but it's, it'll be awhile afore they can get that out of 'em because it's instinct in them, born in them, because the white man didn't ever think that the black woman was important for the husband to stay there and take care of his family. He may send him off for days and weeks at a time.
SS: And they would have that one black man to 'impregnate

... 

DW: All the women that they could.

SS: Because he was strong.

DW: Because he looked strong, and he thought he was

strong, and everyone was strong. The children would be able to
work the farm. So that's the reason they kind of, you know,
like they are now, because you may not know it now but however
you are your children will be like that. Because it's already,
it's in them because it's in you. And so people don't, they
don't believe it a lot of time. They say it's just the women,
but it's the men too. Whatever that man does or is the children
going to be like that. They may not never be around their daddy
and never be around his mama and never see him, but he'll come,
he'll be acting like that. And that's the reason why a lot of
that goes on. And they just got to grow up to it and learn,
cause that day has been dawning so much.

TN: So they learn it's a lot better to just have your wife

and, you know, your family, you know. Mens had three and four
and five or six families, you know.

SS: And would that break up families sometimes. They
would send that one man in there.

DW: Oh, no.

TN: Where's that woman going to go? She didn't have

anything. What was she going to do?
DW: She wasn't going anywhere and the husband, the man, got him over yonder a farming somewhere and the woman ain't going to tell her husband cause she know that he might get mad and go and do something.

SS: So the husbands think that that's his

TAPE ONE -- SIDE B

DW: ... They were just, the men were just happy to be there with their families when they could, because if the man decided that he needed some money he might sell a John off his plantation and send him on way down there and the children grow up without their daddy, 'cause they all doing of the working. He gonna give them some beans and teas or something or another. Or maybe the woman work in the kitchen and she get the leftover food and clothing and stuff like that. It's just, all that. That went on in my day and time even though I wasn't in it.

SS: So in your days, did women do a lot of working in the white folks' houses.

DW: Oh yeah. Uh huh.

DW: Yeah. They worked in their houses. They cooked. They raised their children. That's what I was telling you at first. But you understand you wadin't good enough to come in that front door. When you come, you had to go around and go in the back door, but you could go in there and cook, and see to
the children, and do all of that, in the house once you get in there. But you couldn't come in the front door.

SS: Did you all ever have to do that type of work?
DW: Naw. I ain't never had to do too much of that work.
SS: Where was your first jobs?
DW: My first job?
DW: Chopping cotton. See, we had to chop and pick our own cotton. And like I said, I chopped and picked cotton for my great-grandmother, and my grandmother, and then there was some other black people there. If we get through with our farm, you know, they would hire us, but they'd always hire some of the children in the neighborhood. ( ) would also work because there was a lot of children of us. And most of those people

DW: And ya'll was good workers.

DW: Yeah, and most of those people were aged, were people that didn't have no children or their children was gone, and they was still farming because they didn't have a lot of social security like they have now or ( ) for people to get on and get any help. See, and when my grandfather died, my daddy went down and tried to get his mother on social security then and he had like eight or nine of us was there then, cause we had, yeah, everybody was born. So it was ten of us. Let me see was everybody born. No, Barbara and ( ) was born. So it was like I said, it was about eight or nine 'cause some more children was born after my grandfather died. And they asked him was he not
able to take care of his mother. He got all of these children and he's living on a farm. See, that was what they used to have. He said, no. I'm not able to take care of her. So then they gave him, you know I had, ran across some of those papers the other day where he went down there and the little money that they were giving her. It was hard for them to give her anything to live off. It wasn't like it is now. They give her a little bit, but by my daddy, you know, farming and doing stuff they was able to, you know, take care of her with the little money that they gave. And my great-grandmother, what I'm telling you about, never did on anything. She had a stroke and couldn't move. We had to move her around and do everything for her. She never did get on anything, but they thought because her son was a school teacher and they lived on their farm, of course, school teachers didn't make a lot of money then. And anyway like I said, they sold milk and butter and made ( ), but she never did get nothing.

SS: Did they have health care for blacks when you all was growing up?

DW: Oh, no.

DW: They had, yeah, they still had the health department. We went down there and got our shots. When I was, I remember, we go to the health department and get our shots. And then you remember, in the school one time when syphilis and tuberculous was raging in, you know, the county? They would come to the
schools and give all the children x-rays and they would test them for the syphilis. They would take their, you know, the blood test to see if they had that. And tuberculous was the

DW: Was the disease that was really raging.

DW: They gave x-rays for tuberculous. And if they found anybody that had it, they would send them to Alexander. I know one, they came up with one girl in our community that had it and I guess they didn't have a space for her over there, but they had other people. They had to quarantine her in that house and she was in that one room and nobody, and they wouldn't allow them to go in that room if they started to catch it, and they had to give her her food through the door and she didn't eat out of their dishes. They ate in separate until they sent her over there. So they had, see, I know. My mother used to, the health department then was in the court house. And when my mother, she would take us up there and we got our shots up there at the court house. But then see, you all may didn't come up from down there.

DW: It was a doctor that came around.

DW: That came out there?

DW: Yeah. I didn't think it was a health department.

DW: Yeah. They had that. We went. I remember going to that.

DW: I guess he was working for the health department, but he came out.
DW: Yeah, but he came out. He came out to the rural area. See like they started going around to the schools. They'd go out to the schools in the rural and they'd take them by class and round them up. Had to get everybody. They knew that was.

DW: Everybody get their shots.

DW: Had to get their shots. Yeah, they would come out to the schools and vaccinate everybody. Did that too.

SS: You were telling me earlier that you went to school in different sessions.

DW: Like two months in the summer, and maybe three in the fall. It depended on how the cotton was developing.

DW: Like July and August.

DW: July and August, you went to school.

DW: And you know what? You may didn't get two months in the fall, because sometimes that cotton would ... 

DW: You wouldn't be through chopping.

DW: Yeah, you didn't get through chopping or either that cotton, you start picking cotton about the middle of August. So you go to school all of July and part of August and maybe if they got it put down early, you go to school in June. You may go to school June and July and then part of August.

DW: Them was good times.

DW: Yeah, them was good times. And finally they had in Forrest City the black schools would open up in September like the white schools. And so that was only for the children that
was in the city, but the country children didn't get to go at all.

DW: The country children, living on the farm, they couldn't go.

DW: They couldn't go. Yeah.

SS: It was an all black school where you all went?

DW: All black.

SS: What type of things were in the lessons?

DW: Well, we got the books when the white people got through with them.

DW: That's right. All our books were old books that the white people had passed on down.

DW: Passed down to us.

DW: And then after we got, like when I was in the ninth grade you had to buy your own books. And our books, that was one reason why they was trying to get all the schools to be one.

It was a young lady. We caught the school bus at the same place and we were in the same grade, but her books were different from my books.

DW: Uh huh. That's right.

DW: So we had different books.

SS: So they had newer books?

DW: Uh huh.

DW: We had the old.

DW: And we would have the old books. And when they was
giving you free books like what, first through the eighth grade, and when you got to the ninth, in the large grades you bought your books. So I guess the school decided the curriculum that you was taking so your books would be new then. But until you got to then, you had hand me down books. They'd bring you all these books from the white school.

DW: That's right. That's what she said. Bring them from over there by the truck load.

DW: Yeah. And that's what we studied.

SS: Would you study things like black pride in 19....

DW: Oh no, nothing. We didn't study Black History until we got in high school.

DW: It wasn't too much then.

DW: We had one class. And then our teachers didn't know to say, well, it's important that everybody take Black History. They get a mandatory subject like some of them, like American History and things like that. And that was what you called an elective and you could take it if you wanted to and I wanted to take it. So I took Black History, but a lot of people didn't. Had one class of Black History.

DW: That's right. Not many of us got a chance to really read about Black History. My first daughter went to college at Pine Bluff and she brought me a Black History book from the library over here from Meek's Creek. And that's when it really carried me on back to things I'd hear'd my grandmother say and
all that you know, because it was in there. See?

SS: Did they have leaders that they would talk about that people usually look up to?

DW: Oh, no. They didn't tell you nothing about that. They didn't want you to know who ( ).

SS: Booker T. Washington, for example.

DW: No. You didn't get that until you got in high school.

DW: That's right.

DW: They didn't talk about that too much. They didn't talk about that too much. They always wanted to keep that hid. You know what I mean.

DW: And I'll tell you the way the white man was with it. He wanted to keep all the goods that the black person had done hid and so you would always look up to them. You know what I mean. They didn't want you to have no black person to look up to. Well, that's right. That's the truth.

DW: That made me think about something that my father-in-law said that happened. He said that when they, the first two row planter, a black man invented it down here at ...

DW: Tuskegee.

DW: No. He said right down here in New Castle area and a white guy came by and he had made this and he was just doing his farm with it, and told him, came down there and bought it from him. And he told him don't make nary nother one. And see, we was, if the white man told us not to do it, we wouldn't do it.
I mean, he made it, and that's when they first started two row plows and they went from that to the four row and six and eight row like they do now. And took it away from us. You know, he patented that. He got the ( ), but the black did it like most of the things. That happened right here.

SS: Do you know the black man's name?

DW: I don't know his name. My father-in-law was just telling me about it. I know he knows it, but I don't.

DW: That's just the way they done. They didn't want you to know nothing of that nature.

DW: I bet you he could tell you. If you'd get to talk to him, he could tell you all that stuff.

DW: The black had done, cause they wanted to keep you looking up to them, you see. And so that's the way it was. They didn't allow the black teachers.

SS: Did your parents ever sit you down and explain to you why things were the way they were?

DW: That's how I know as much as I do, because my parents would talk to me, you know, and explain. Now you know, my grandmother was ( ) sharecropper for awhile until she could save up her some money and then she bought her place.

DW: That's the way they did.

DW: But now, of course, there was some that I know that was sharecroppers from the beginning to the ending and they never had nothing. They didn't know how to manage their money
and save.

SS: When did you first realize that there was a black society and then a white society?

DW: Well, I knowed that a long time ago. Let me tell you something that happened a long time ago. My mother was washing for this lady and she was ( )'s bookkeeper. You remember ( )?

DW: Uh huh. Yeah, I know. Uh huh.

DW: And so she come to the house one time to pick up her clothes and she asked me was, where's the girl. And I said, I looked at her, you know. I'm standing right here looking at her. I'm the girl. Mama's the woman. And I looked at her and she said, you know what I'm talking about. Where's the girl? I said I'm the girl. Here I am. You know. I said my mother's a woman. And she told me don't get smart with her. I said don't you get smart with me and call my mama no girl. From that day on, you know, I began standing up a little more and more. But she didn't say anything else. My mother is the girl. That's what they were called. The girl and boy. That's the way she told me. Said, well, where's the girl. You know. I looked at her and she said it again. I said, here I am. I'm the girl. And when she told me don't get smart with her. So that's just the way they was.

SS: So they wouldn't use Mr. and Mrs.

DW: Oh, naw. Uh huh. They didn't even want to call you by your name.
SS: They didn't want to use the first name?

DW: Uh huh. Call you like you suppose to be called. You know.

DW: They did me like that. My sister and I. Our mother was kind of sickly like and she never was able to go with too much and this particular day we were all in the store. And a woman walked up and said, what you girls want? And that made my sister and I really upset. We said, girls? She said, no the mama, not no girls.

DW: You never did get grown. They always waited when they was talking to you. I don't care if the person was 70 years old. Hey, boy. You know. You never got grown in their eyesight. You always was a child. See they wanted you to stay little children in their eyes. They wanted you to call them mister. You know. That's just the way they was.

SS: So, even when they were little.

DW: If you was working in their place, I've hear'd people say as soon as the kid get up, mister so and so, they start calling him that. So you, you know, are Miss So and So. Isn't Miss So and So pretty? So you would say it. You see what I mean? That's just right. That's just the way they did.

DW: That's right, cause I remember my daddy say it happened to him too.

DW: That's right, cause that's just the way it was.
DW: Something wrong with your granddaddy's legs.

???: My granddaddy. Yeah. They call him a boy and he was on a stick. That's right. He on a stick.

DW: You didn't get too old for them to call you a boy and girl or uncle and aunt. My grandmother told a white man once, she said don't be calling me no aunt. I ain't no kin to you. I ain't none of your aunts. So he kept saying aunt.

???: I remember it. They were going to the ( ) store.

SS: Call me by that name.

( several unidentified ladies joined the conversation )

SS: Did people get very angry over that?

DW: Yeah, you know you couldn't like it.

DW: You didn't say nothing though.

DW: Uh huh. A lot of times you couldn't say nothing, but it always made you made mad inside. If you couldn't say it on the outside. You know. You didn't want nobody saying uncle and aunt to you when you ain't no kin to 'em. And a grown person don't want you saying boy and girl to them. So that really was a ( ).

SS: How did the people in the neighborhood respond to each other? Would they help the blacks and other blacks? Help each
other?

DW: Oh, yeah, then it's not like now, but in our community, I'll say our black community, if somebody got sick or unable to handle their crops or like they wadn't going to get it out, when the other people would finish theirs, they all go over there and give him a day. I mean give him a day. Just chop his cotton out or plow it out. And if he was sick, then they would just go over there and work that crop out.

SS: They would help.

DW: They would help. People really stuck together more then than they do now.

DW: Than they do now.

DW: It seems like we been kind of blessed, you know. We done got to the place we ain't like that no more.

DW: And like if they was building a house? All the men in the neighborhood go and help build the house and the women would cook the food for taking down there ready to eat. And they'd build that house. That house build up, get the sugar bowl and then if the woman was sick in the house the ladies in the community would come over and cook and clean up the house and wash all the clothes and everything. They were washing on a rub board and they would come over and do that. And if there was a lady in the community and she had a lot of boys and she was sick or whatever and you know like the boys tear their pants, they don't do that now, but they patched then. Tell them to send
their pants over here and I'll fix the boy's pants. They'd send them over there and they'd patch those clothes. And if they had vegetables in their gardens, they would say send the children over here to get some vegetables or either carry them to your house. If they was killing hogs, they would send everybody some of the meat and stuff like that.

SS: Were there any like bad storms or disasters that ruined the area or crops?

DW: Not in my time and I never heard of my daddy and them talking about nothing that happened like that. It could have happened, but I just didn't know about it.

??: I remember my granddaddy talking about the influenza that came over. It killed his first wife.

DW: It just killed the people. They couldn't dig graves fast enough. When the first, when the flu first came out ...

DW: When was that babe? Like 1912 and 19 ( ) See, whatever, and you know, I forgot about that. My aunt, the lady I told you I would like for you to meet, I think it was like 12 children of them, but see, I told you, it had to be the early 1900's, cause I told you she's like 84, 82, about 90. Close to 90 years old. So it had to be the very early 1900's and late, you know. And they had it and the doctor gave them the wrong medicine and all of the children died but them two. Sure did. Give them the wrong medicine and they all died. I think it was like 10 or 12 of them. So you're talking about 8 or 10 kids
going in one family. I guess probably one behind the other.

DW: ( ) She used quinine and whiskey. You know at that time most of the whiskey was home made whiskey.

DW: That's what they used for that fever. My mother used to use that quinine for that fever. And they knew how to dose it out. They would give 'em smaller dose of that. Yeah, they did that.

DW: Had to break their fever.

DW: Well, you know they had typhoid fever. We were just blessed because I guess everybody in the family had typhoid fever. My sister had ( )

DW: Had typhoid and malaria.

DW: We had that and they don't know where it come from. And see, I guess that's why we were tied up with the health department so much, because they came out trying to check and see was it in our water and where did it come from and where did we get it from. And they said the mosquitos carried it, but they were coming out, you know, kind of religiously. I was a small girl. I had to be about four or five years old, but I could remember all of this. And you know then they had outside bathrooms and I can remember that instead of us using our bathroom, they my daddy dig different little holes in the ground around places where they had to use the bathroom. And I don't know exactly how long they came out and checked it, but I know that they came out. The health women, you know, would come out
and they would test. They were trying to see where did we get it from.

DW: Where did you all get the malaria from.

DW: Where did we get that malaria from. But the Lord blessed. Didn't any of us die from it. The doctor came out and they gave me too many aspirins and made me, I guess, 'lucinate or see things that weren't even there, but it would just look like big things crawling up the wall. And I'd be wanting to get out of the way to run. My daddy had to hold me in the bed and the doctor said giving me too many aspirins, for me to take, I don't take aspirins now. For me never to take aspirins any more. And see it may be, I don't know if I was allergic to aspirins or what, but they did that. But I had that fever took out all of my hair off. At that time I had long hair.

DW: ...had to learn how to walk again and everything. I had it.

DW: I did too. I had to learn how to walk all over too.

SS: How old were you with that?

DW: I was like four or five years.

DW: I guess I was about eight. I can't remember now. And I had a first cousin to die from it. Two of my aunt's children had it and one of them died. Oh, he was sick. He was just hopelessly sick.

DW: They get that bad you couldn't do nothing. They was hot and no fan and no electricity then. We got electricity like
what, '49 in the rural areas.

DW: I can remember my mother boiling my water, cause they thought first it might have been in the water.

DW: Uh huh. See we had to do that too. They thought it was the water. I don't know of nobody, I can't think of nothing else that happened that I remember them talking about.

DW: We told you about the flu and we told you typhoid and malaria and that's it.

SS: Was there ever any hard times like depression?

DW: All the time.

DW: Yeah. It was steady jobs, but it wadn't no money. And they'd go to work, they would go to work and people paying them off in a ham, chicken, potatoes, and things like that. And my father-in-law said that he walked all the way out there from where I am down there to where Tole's place is now to go work to meet a man down town. And he's talking about eight miles that he walked to work and walked back in the evening. And he might get paid off in a sack of potatoes. It was just no money. I hear my daddy talk about it. It was no money. That was back in the days of depression.

DW: We were living depression daily. And I think that went on until, who was it, was it Roosevelt, was elected president and he started things up, the economy or whatever.

DW: Oh, was that when it was?

DW: Uh huh, because at first I know they said it was
setting out these vines that you see growing.

DW: That's what my daughter Carry tell me.

SS: The vines? What were they doing?

DW: She told me that the honeysuckle vines that we have here and I can't think of that other vine, but it grow and they brought it here and they set it out to curve a hilly area, the washing of the land and everything, and now they say it has taken over.

SS: It's probably kudzu.


DW: Uh huh, but they let the WPA folk did it, see, and that gave them a job.

DW: A job and they cleaned off the side of the roads and cut the trees down. I remember that cause I used to be scared to walk down the road.

DW: That's right. That was the first job that they had.

SS: They were suppose to put those vines out. What were they suppose to do?

DW: The vines?

SS: Yes.

DW: They would keep it from washing.

DW: Keep the land tight. Keep it from erosion. I guess you call it that.

DW: But that was the first job that they had and that was under Roosevelt.
SS: Oh yes.

DW: Absolutely. After he was elected president he set up this, what was it, the WPA, and they started peoples to working.

DW: And the CC Camps.

DW: CC Camp. That's right. All that was under him.

SS: Did they have black women's organizations and clubs here?

DW: My mother did. They had what they called a Home Demonstration Club in my community and they did a lot of things. And in that time too when you talking about a lot of people didn't have mattresses to sleep on. They were making straw, they made their mattresses out of straw if they could get any straw and so then instead of being in churches or where ever they had and taught the women how to make mattresses. And they made their mattresses with cotton and then they gave them mattresses to sleep on because of them were either feathers where they had picked off the chickens or either straw. They'd go out and the straw was grass. You go out and pull a certain kind of grass they knew how to pull and put in these mattresses to make for their beds to sleep on. I remember that. I remember that. I was a little girl, but I remember mama and them made those mattresses. And I know that we had several mattresses, straw mattresses before then. I remember that.

SS: What other types things did the home demonstration club do?
DW: Oh, they would cane, cause they would come around and cane down there. You know, you get your stuff ready, you know, and everybody would meet in a certain place and everybody would cane. They would teach you how to sew.

SS: Sew and cook. Were there any other local organizations that women would get together and meet.

DW: Nothing but they church meetings. You know. They had those, but that in the community and what they would do, like if I had a lot of pieces and things I was going to cane, the home demonstration lady would come out and teach them how to cane and then all the other women in that community would be there to help. Then you go to their house and you do it. And also they started teaching them how to sew and make clothes. And then they were buying a lot of flour and they would be in 50 pound bags and they would take that material and most of the time they would try to get two sacks the same color so they could make these. And then some times they didn't have maybe the same floor and that's when they come out, you know people used to wear their different colors in the country and that's why they called it the country look. Because the country girl would be wearing them two toned dresses we call them now they wearing that stuff, but the people then knowed how to make 'em just like they making them now. They may have one leg this color and then they make sure they had one sleeve, you know, and on like that and the wording they got on the sack. And then they would make
their towels and pillow cases out of cotton sacks. They be the part that was on the ground where that they drag would wear out. So they had to throw the sack away and the women would take them and bleach them and they'd make their own line and they'd bleach these sacks. They'd bleach them white and they made sheets and pillow cases and face towels out of 'em, and maybe clothes. If they looked real good, make some little pants or little shirt tops 'cause they good heavy, you know, stiff stuff. They did all those things. And they made their own lye. They made their own lye out of ashes.

DW: Yeah, I grew up to that. You like it.

DW: And they made their hominy. They made everything.

DW: My grandmother set up the wash pot out there after she had all this canning and maybe done pulled corn and she made a couple of wash pots of hominy. After she done that, she'd set the wash pot up and make her own soap. She always saved her meats drippings, you know. All through the year she'd get her lye from town and make the soap. She had long wooden boxes.

DW: See, my grandmother made her lye and her made her soap. She had a certain kind of wood and they put all these, when they take the ashes out of the fire and they'd save them and put them in this barrel and they put some water in it and then when they dripped it would make that lye. And then they would save that and then they would make this soap. And then they had a certain kind of fat they saved to make their face
soap, like chicken fat and ( ) little fat and I think geese and ducks and all of that. They would cook that and that's what they made their face and soap to take your bath in. Okay. And then this other one that she's talking about just meat drippings and that. That was the soap they made to wash your clothes in.

SS: Was church mandatory when you were growing up?

DW: With my parents? Oh yeah. You was at church. Well, you know, you didn't mind going cause all the other children was going to be there and if you weren't having nothing at your church, you would go down to the next church, it was three miles and walk with those children. And those children would come back up there with you and everybody wanted to go to church and say they speeches and things they'd learn, 'cause it was what you called recreation to us. Like the children go to the shows and the ball games and stuff like that. You went to church and that was recreation and you enjoyed it. They had something Wednesday night or Friday night, you was there. And they had what we called box suppers at church.

SS: What's a box supper?

DW: Okay. (laughter) Like each lady fixed a box, would fix a box, a small little box and there would be enough food in there for two people. And so like I would say, I want you to buy my box. And so you'd pay me $5 but it was likely whatever $2 and that went to the church. And then we'd sit up there and ate. Another couple would be over there and eating and all like
that. And that was a box supper. It's what we call fellowship now. You know, you just set up a big table and you go, but they called it boxed supper then. And each lady would have her box decorated up nice on the outside and this stuff. I never did do a boxed supper, but I was a girl and I know what my mother and them used to do about suppers and things that went on in that time. And that's what they did and that's how they would do, but it was really a fellowship but they called it boxed suppers.

BREAK IN TAPE

DW: ... said if you went to vote they would charge a dollar that would block a lot of black people from voting because they wouldn't have this dollar. You see what I mean. So they went to charging a dollar. and you go and pay your dollar, you know, and put your name and when you was born and everything on it. And then that's when you would vote. But as things opened up, you know, they found out that that was unlawful to make you pay a dollar to vote and they did away with it. But that went on for years here. You had to pay that dollar to vote. When you'd go there, they'd open this big book up, you know, for your name and if you hadn't paid that dollar then you didn't vote.

DW: And sometimes yore name wouldn't be on there. I went up there one time, because my husband always when he paid his
poll tax he paid mine, and we got there and they couldn't find mine and we had been voting, you know. So I said, well, Lord, I won't get to vote today. And I didn't carry my purse that day. I usually carry my purse. We got home. My husband said get out and go get it. Went on in that house and got that poll tax receipt. They give you a receipt and you usually keep it in your purse all the time. And I don't know why I went without my purse, cause I usually been going up there and I carried my poll tax up there, my receipt, so they had to let me vote because I had my receipt. And see, that's how they tricked a lot of black people. They didn't have their receipt and so their name wasn't on there. They deliberately left their name off.

SS: Did that stop any blacks from voting? That dollar?

DW: Oh, yeah. Cause a lot of 'em. It's just like they don't have to pay to vote and they won't vote because the white man done told them that your vote's not going to count anyway. And so they still believe this. Oh, it's not going to count. I might as well not go. Because when they first started that's what they'd tell you when they let black people vote. Yore vote ain't but a half a vote or a fourth of a vote. It take four of ya'll's votes to make one vote. And the people believed it. Because they lived on the man's farm and he said it. They knewed he was telling the truth.

DW: They believe now that they know a week before whether you white or black cause I was trying to tell (   ) there's no
way they can tell who you is when you vote. Now, ain't that right, ( ) but she believes still that they'll know that she was black or voted black. You see.

DW: Your name is not on it but the people.

SS: That would stop her. That would have stopped her from going out.

DW: Uh huh. Cause they afraid if they don't vote the way. Cause see, a lot of the way they do, see they still turn lose their files. If they going to win an election, they'll go out and give me a little money to get a whole lot of them to vote or those that likes to drink, they'll throw them a big fish fry party or something. And they be afraid not to vote for those people cause they think that they going to know that they did vote or not vote. And so they go up there and vote for 'em. It's going on right now. That's not old. That's now. That's now. But that's not what you want to know about. Now. You want to know about way back.

DW: It shore is true.

??: I know one thing they would do. They used to load up a bunch of them on the truck and he'd tell them how to vote and then they'd go in and vote just like they told them.

SS: They'd put them on a truck.

DW: Now this lady, I worked at the school for five years, Mrs. Harris, and she would come in, all of us in the kitchen, you know, and she would come in and call herself have a meeting.
And she was going to tell us who to vote for. Well, this Miss Johnson was our supervisor. I don't know whether ( ) when Mrs. Harrison left, I said, huh, she don't tell me how to vote. I'm going to vote like I want. Don't say it. Don't say it. She thought the woman could hear me and the woman was gone. She was just that scared. She didn't want me to talk. That's right.

SS: People were afraid then.

DW: Yeah, they was really afraid.

DW: They afraid now. That was just a lady she was talking about. That's what? In the sixties or the seventies?

DW: Uh huh. In the seventies.

DW: In the seventies.

DW: Uh huh. That's right. And she was afraid. She thought that woman still could hear me. That's right. Don't talk like that. Don't talk like that. I said why? She'd be scared and I'd just hush, you know, cause I knowed I was going to vote the way I wanted to vote.

SS: Did they have the NAACP here?

DW: Yeah.

DW: Yeah. We still have it here.

SS: Would they do voter education and things like that.

DW: They used to do it more then they do now when they first started, but they do it now, but not as much as they did.

In the early seventies and sixties they had what they called a Voter's League and they would have meetings and they would kind
of go block and they would try to get all of the black people to vote, you know, one way. Get all your votes one way. Well, actually that's the way we were able to get some black people in office that we do have now, cause you know at one time everything was white.

DW: White. Lily white.

DW: So now we just beginning to try again, you know, black people in positions. And the NAACP, that's why we got black people in the stores and things. We literally had to boycott stores and stop that. A number of stores went out of business because of the fact that we boycotted them and would not buy.

SS: Which stores went out of business?

DW: Clare, Gin, and Alston's. At first they said they would never hire a black person, but they finally hired a black person on the tail end, but he was just as good as them shopping. So they literally had to go out. And Corn's was one of the main big stores. They went out of business because the black people just stopped patronizing them. And ya'll may know some others that was big stores that went out of business on account of that.

SS: They followed you in the stores then?

DW: At Corn's they did, but they finally hired some blacks too, but see it was too late cause the people had got, found out they could get good stuff every place and then they found out a lot of the stuff they thought was getting good was not good.
And so they had to go out of business cause they were not getting any trade. Black people used to really spend their money there. They would go there because it was a nice place. And Mizzell, Gin, and Alston's was the same way too and they went down because they were some of our better stores.

DW: And there used to be a Hecht's store ( ) next to Arthur's.

DW: Coming this way and she had to close. Shore did and they closed too. And what was their name? Balaski? Balaski? Balaski?

DW: Something like that. They had to go out of business. So they said they never would hire blacks but they finally had to hire them but it was just too late you know.

SS: Where did most people shop here?

DW: Now or after, when they had the boycott?

SS: Like in the fifties and sixties?

DW: They shopped in Forrest City at these stores what I'm telling you about. They were the main stores. And they had Doolie's. They had Grayber's. And at one time we had a Goldstein's.

DW: Shore did and he went out of business.

DW: And so those stores went out of business. Now, the other store they moved out by Safe Way, that men's store. But those were the stores that went out of business and that's where the black people shopped that weren't able to go nowhere. And
at that time some of the black people were getting up and they
had a little money, they would go to Memphis and do a lot of
shopping in Memphis.

SS: Oh yeah.

DW: And so when they started boycottting these stores
because they wouldn't hire nobody then they went to Wynn's.
That's the closest place and bought their groceries and they
clothes and, you know, things like that. And so, but that's
what they did. The NAACP did that. That's how they got black
mens on the police force.

SS: Were there local people that were leaders in that
movement.

DW: Yes, they had, let me see. I can't remember all of
'em. When I was in school, there was one of them. Cephus
Twillie, Allen Twillie. Oh, we didn't tell about the time,
about the school. They need to know about that.

(    )

DW: Sweet Willie Wine. He was from Memphis. He came over
and worked with 'em.

SS: Sweet Willie Wine? What did he do?

DW: Well, he was from Memphis. He was one of the people
that would come in talking to them and trying to help get them
together and starting the walking and everything. But even
then, they beat him up real bad. Police got him and beat him up
real bad, but it didn't stop him. Willie had to do it. But with the school situation, the children from the black school they was tired of this stuff. They walked over to the white schools and it was so many of them and they called the police out there. They didn't get all of 'em, but they had a whole big two ton truck load of 'em, full of 'em, and had a school bus full of 'em. Had so many of them they couldn't put them in jail. They took and put them in the they had what they called the white swimming pool, they put them in a white swimming pool in there.

SS: Put them in a swimming pool.

DW: No, you know where you go to undress to go in the pool.

SS: Oh.

DW: That's where they put 'em.

DW: They had a lot. I'm telling you.

DW: ( )

DW: And they had all these childrens in there and so then, they didn't really didn't' do nothing. They just ordered.

DW: There wasn't nothing they could do, but they was trying to ( ). To make them stop.

DW: To make them stop.

SS: This Sweet Willie Wine. Was he a leader in that.

DW: Well, he come from Memphis.

DW: Well, he was the one coming over here and helping.
But they had, Reverend Cooley was one of the leaders here. Cecil Twillie. Allen Twillie, Steve Murray, Ralph Fields, and some of the other people that I don't know. These's just the ones that I know and you probably know some others that were working in there at that same time. But you know,

DW: Anita Bradley.

DW: Yeah, Mrs. Bradley. Mrs. Black. She was ( ). Mrs. Nathaniels. But you know, what they did they shipped two of the black boys away from here real quickly and they knew that they were going to kill those boys. They had to get what you call a hiatus corpus to get those people back here before they did anything to 'em. Brother Cooley was instigated in doing that, cause see that's what they would do. They'd get you out and they would kill you. Cause I guess they thought they were the ring leaders in it and so they had to, you know, had to get them out. And then they kept, they had to go to court in Little Rock and they carried these two bus loads of children over there to that court. And a lot of the farmers put their farms up to bail these children out of jail when they did this. My father is one of the ones. Put his farm up to get these children out cause they go their bail bond.

SS: Aw, and they would sell the land.

DW: No, they didn't do it. They just put it up for a bond in order to get them out of jail. Nobody had to lose any property, but see they didn't want to let them out. They wadn't
going no place, but anyway they wanted out. They couldn't do anything about it. The superintendent up there and everybody up they'd take the kids to tell you about it. When they went to court over there it was a mess. So they won. So ain't nobody lost anything. But they just had to, well, see. It was too many black people coming together. At that time they was all in one court. That's why they couldn't do nothing. If you could always get that many black people to stand up cause them people didn't want to lose their money. So they could do what they wanted. And that's how they were able to get what they wanted because the black people refused to go over the picket line. And then the black women was taking food and drink up there on the picket line for these, you know, the children. It was ( ) grown men, old men, but anyway they carried food up there.

   DW: ( ) was marching and dancing.

   DW: They carried food up there. Fry up them some chicken and they would eat and what they would do they had it like if I march two hours or three hours they somebody else there tomorrow. And they had it set up religiously where they could march. So people that would swear that they really couldn't march or in the business of working with the government or stuff, they was behind the scenes doing work and helping those people that can march.

   SS: How did they go out and get all of those people together like that.
DW: They told them they were going to have a town meeting and they just meet down here at Stuart Park and everybody met and they talked and they knew where it was. And then they got together, you know, and then they had what they call a peaceful co-existence which was a black organization. And they'd set up their strategy and tell what they were going to do. And they had the list of all the people that was going to march and they knew what time for them to march. And we had Uncle Tom's in there and the black be going back telling what's going to happen when the meeting over that night. And the white men know but it was too many of us they couldn't do nothing. If it had been two or three, that's when they come in and bomb you, but they couldn't do that because they knew somebody going to see them and they get them.

SS: Did the large group ever have any confrontation with the police or any of the people that were in resistance?

DW: ( ) one time down town there was a bunch of whites on one side of the street. Did you hear about that? ( ) Stared at the whites just come ( ), but they didn't come no closer.

DW: Well, see they had, in fact they had to have a permit to do this march. The people had went and got everything that they need. So therefore that's why there wadn't no confrontation. It wasn't that they were just going into something and didn't know what to do. They had people that knew the law, but even though they got to us and at that time they
probably did have two law books in St. Francis County, one for blacks and one for whites.

(everybody talking at the same time)

DW: ( ) Lawyer Walker was the lawyer that they had. I mean, they weren't just going into this thing blind. They had other people helping them outside, you know, and it was the NAACP lawyers. So they just weren't going into, ...

DW: Little Rock, you know.

DW: Yeah. They had lawyers and if they had any cases, I mean, you know, they had them, so they were fighting 'em. So they did it all legally where there was nothing they could really be done with and they weren't doing nothing but they had a certain amount of feet they had to walk from the door. They couldn't, if I wanted to go in the door, they couldn't stop me and not let me go in. But now, what am I going to look like. You up there marching and I'm going to be walking in. So very few people walked in and bought anything, you know, over their market. Anyway, there was a number of feet that they had to walk the outside of the curbing too. Get too close to ( ) door, but they were constantly marching, you know, in front of the building that they were boycotting. And everybody knew that they were going to be boycotting that day before they went.

SS: What year did this whole thing begin?
DW: That had to be like what? Sixty-five or sixty-six?

DW: Somewhere along in there.

DW: Cause the last school that we had for legal, was it '69 or '70? So shortly after they started marching and doing all this stuff they were able to help them to integrate schools. First they had freedom of choice.

DW: That's right.

DW: And freedom of choice and it was that I could sign my child up to go over there to that school if I wanted to. And so they did that like what, about a couple of years? So that freedom of choice must have started about 1966 or '67, cause I remember my daughter graduated from over there in 1968.

DW: My daughter graduated and I had a girl and a boy, you know.

DW: Uh huh. That was before that they had totally integrated the schools. And so then they had freedom of choice and they thought the black people would be afraid to sign their children up to go over there. So I signed mine up. And so they was telling me, well, they not too good a student. You going to sign them up. I said I can't sign one up without signing the other one up.

DW: That's right.

DW: But she did good over there. They had her, you need to talk to them, they had a lot of confrontations going on over there too that we didn't know about. Some of the things the
children talk about it now.

DW: ( ) my daughter, ( ) daughter, and ( ) girl, well, you know how it is. This girl and her friends and she was here and Heddy was over there and since the girls did talk about various things ( ). And she come home and told me and I said very good.

DW: Well, they did all kinds of things. I know one day my daughter got off the bus and the man kept them on and he was going to tell them about ya'll going to have to do something with these big book satchels and things I have on the bus every night. And so when the man got through talking to them, cause he let all the other children off and just kept these black kids.

DW: Uh huh. Wanted to talk to them.

DW: And he say, I thank ya'll, and my daughter said, you're not welcome. And the bus driver got upset and went and told the principal. But Mr. Collins was on our side. He had never had no trouble out of Gloria so he said, oh, I'm sure you're wrong. He said we ain't never had no trouble out of her.

Said she has a speech impediment and I'm sure you misunderstood her. I'm sure she said you are welcome. So they didn't do nothing to the white bus driver that time because they decided that Gloria couldn't talk correct. And they had her in this class for speech therapy. But she said, mama, I told that man he was not welcome and she didn't tell the man that she told
him that. And the white guy on our side because she had never given him no problem. And he could not believe that this nice young lady said that to the man. I'm sure she said you are welcome.

DW: ( ) got to fighting at the bus line up there on the corner and Madeline said an old girl had been meddling so she really show out, you know, ( ) and so said I'm here from Atlanta. I'm going to show her who I am. ( ) Madeline went into her and tore a loose fit to call the police ( ).

DW: Yeah, I remember him.

DW: ( ) He was the one they called and he say, well, what's going on here. Madeline didn't want to tell him how they had been doing her every morning and she had just got tired, you know, and she jumped on her. And so he said, ya'll get on this bus and go on to school. You know, ( ) that's all he could do, you know, to come down there and beat her up. So they had they problems. They had problems.

SS: After that did the situation get better with integration?

DW: Well, it got better cause it had to. They had to have it, you know. Don't they would have lost a lot of ( ) and they couldn't afford to stand independent here, you know.

DW: And by having black teachers. See, at the beginning it was nothing but white teachers there but it was black students there because they had been assigned to go to that
school and they had no black teachers. So once they consolidated the schools then they had to put black teachers in there. So you know some of the things that they were doing to the children or saying they didn't get an opportunity to do it because they knew the black teachers there and they would see them. I'm sure, because see she's a teacher and she worked in the school system and she saw, I'm sure they don't do the things they did at one time and they have to pretend even though they are prejudiced they have to pretend that they not. Cause see, I just had a bad experience with the Boy Scouts with my little grandson up there, you know. They know in order to continue keep getting this money they need some blacks in there, but once they get them in there they don't know how to treat them and they treat them like a dog. And I was thoroughly upset when I went and got him yesterday that I didn't notice when I picked him up but then after he told me when he got in the bus and he was say, Ma. I said, no, honey, you will not be going back next year. That's for sure. You won't be there, because they want you there, but then, and he was in an area where no blacks and nothing, and they just didn't do and I feel like the people that he was working with they should have, you know, treated him differently from what they did and so they didn't do it. But I said, well, you don't understand because you're not used to it. He's never been around so he didn't realize, know what they were doing to him, but he did know that they give him a raw
deal, but he thought that well, since they was elders I had to do. But I said, naw, you didn't have to do that. I said they had you up there making a slave out of you. I ( ) I said who else did they have out there cutting grass. I said, and you going to cut, how long did you cut grass. About eight hours a day. I said when was your. I said, naw, uh huh, I said you ...

SS: And the others didn't have to cut grass? The other ones didn't cut grass.

DW: Naw, they didn't cut grass. See they thought that it was only for the niggers to do. I said, yeah, they have, Well, mama, you see, I was the only one that could run this machine. I said. Naw, they knew that you was a nigger and if anything happened to it you weren't going to come bothering by. You were going to go on and fix it yourself. So they wanted you out there cutting grass. I said, no. I said, you not going to go back anymore. So you don't even have to ask me about it. I said, naw. And when they, talk, we ain't had no blacks to be up here and be on staff in ten years and I guess not. Cause I shore won't be recommending any more to go. I said you will go up there and do your little camp and get yore little eagle scouts and get out. That they not going to be making a slave out of you. I said if you don't have nothing to do but sit at home and twiddle your thumbs. I said, you'll be sitting there twiddling your thumbs. But you know I'm on the farm. I got plenty of work. I raise hogs and I got junk and stuff. You
could have been down there. I mean, I said, you could make enough and get your school stuff, you know, whatever you got to have, and I won't deal with that. So it's still going on. They try to sugar coat it over like this happening. And see, he won't talk. I know the white guy knew, but if he asked me how were they treating him, but I didn't pick a bone. He knew about it, but he didn't say nothing to me about it when he come talk to me. So I knew they knew about it. Cause he didn't like, you guys ( ) don't like it. It always ( ) don't like it and they know that they want to hit me. Cause they know that you need to go ( ), you know, and so, and that's the way it is now. They know, they want right is right. they know I can't hate you and make it into heaven.

TAPE TWO -- SIDE A

DW: Because they have to. Because a lot of them have to be closed down if they don't hire some of us. And you have some people that didn't know nothing about black people, they only had what they had heard. And once they work with you and find out you are nothing like what they had been taught that you are. So then they treat you differently. And see, that's what happened to him. He came in. A little white boy saw that they were mistreating him in doing everything and he, I guess they had him staying, he was suppose to be on staff, but they had him
in his tent by himself. And so this little boy moved out and came over there with him and helped him get a lot of stuff to help him. And I think they resented that fact too. And then he said all the little children were running up behind and hanging all over him and some of the little white kids was calling him daddy and all this stuff and they didn't like that. They didn't like that, cause, you know, just one thing. But he knew his work and any subject they came up with, he knew something about it. And so, you know, they didn't like this smart nigger cause he knew too much for them.

SS: Well, when you all were growing up what type of social activities did they have for young blacks? Like, what would you do for entertainment.

TN: Go to church.

SS: So the church would be the ...

DW: Well, the, you ( ) club meeting and then they had, in my area, they had on Saturday evenings, you know, this time of year, I guess starting about June, they had what they called, at the school, we had a black school out in the community, and we had a ball diamond and so they'd have a ball game. And we would go out there and watch the ball game and then it would be, people would have stand set up and they'd be selling ice cream, sandwiches, barbecued sandwiches and cold lemonade and stuff like that and you'd go out there and do that on Saturday evening. And then like I said, they had movies, but it was a
black movie and the children in town, I guess they went to the movies. I don't know what they did. This is country what I'm talking about. We in the country so we're not in the city. So I don't know what all the children did, you know, in the city other than go to the movies. After the children got up, this was going on the children, the children could walk to it and they would have it until it get dark. You know it's not dark until nine o'clock now and then they would have those things. And then they would have those things. And they'd have singing.

We had a lot of quartets singing and people singing. They would go to the, the churches would be having something that night and they'd have quartet singing and stuff like that. And at this school, we had a Rosenwald School. Those kind.

TN: I went to a Rosenwald school.

SS: Rosenwald school?

DW: Yes, Rosenwald School. There was this white guy put up this money named Rosenwald and built these schools for the blacks people and they home economic building. They taught the children how to cook and sew and all those things in that school. And they, I guess they had a big room. And they would have little dances and stuff like that cause they had graphanolas where you wind them up to play the music.

SS: ( )

DW: Right, the music. No. We called them graphanolas and you wind them up.
TN: We called them music boxes.

DW: You talking music box, but when, and we call it a record player now, but it was a graphanola and they had to wind it up and you put this record on there and it'd play this music, you know, and they'd dance and ask somebody during that. And they had those things like that and sometimes they had people that played pianos and guitars and they would go to these houses and they would have socials there and their children dance and, you know, did things like that.

SS: Did they have courting practices then that were different from now?

DW: Have what?

SS: Courting practices? ( ) starting relationships

DW: Aw, well, yeah. It was different from what it is now, because that boy, certain things that they do now they wouldn't do. They know if you don't come there by nine o'clock, you going to be leaving the house or they be walking their track and they get up and go and they know they going to come, what Saturday night or maybe they might come over to see them on Wednesday. They might go to church. You know, walk them to church, and walk them over to if they have these socials at this house, and take them out to this ball game what I was telling you about when they, you know, had all that stuff. That was my time, and I don't know how they did it earlier before if they didn't have that.
TN: They was still ( ) every year like ( ) my grandmother said. See back there then, you know, it wasn't all these children, you know, born like it is cause some of them fathers they put a gun, a shotgun on you. You know, you just didn't do that. You didn't come into his house and mess his family up like that. They just didn't stand for that. That's right.

SS: They'd take their weapons to you.

TN: That's right. They'd take their shotguns and you'd marry that girl.

DW: Yeah, but they were a little more different than what they are now, because everybody was, you know, they got a lapse in there where they decided to tell the girl she suppose to keep her dress tail down and the boy didn't have to restrain himself any. But back then it was different. He knew that he had to restrain his self and the girl knew she had to restrain herself too. And so that made it different you didn't have this many, but when they got lapsed ( ) that's when the ( ). So now they trying to get back and let them know that it's both of them's responsibility not just one person responsibility. Because there's nothing that one person can do with that other person if he gets his mind made up. And so they learned that. And so that was the difference then. They work on the land. You better not mess with Mr. So and So's daughter. He'll kill you and they knew that. And they had their head on the right place when they went there. They was going to talk, sit down and eat
watermelon or whatever they going to do, play their little games that they let them play, you know. They played dominos, checkers, and some people played cards, but my parents wouldn't let us play cards. But we did play dominos and checkers and have popcorn parties and little things like that. And shoot marbles and balls, you know, at your house and hop-scotch, all these little different things. They did stuff like that. And you enjoyed it, you know.

TN: It was nice.

SS: At what point did you know you had I guess you both can answer the question when you had gone from girlhood to womanhood.

TN: Well, how did you know it?

SS: Yes. When would you consider yourself having left, a grown person.


TN: Did your life change very much then?

TN: Well, yes. I don't know. Sometimes you hate it. I guess some of it you hate to get grown, because you don't have anything growing up. If you work the way I do much after you got grown. It wasn't like it is now, because it wasn't no work for you. And a lot of the people that I know when they did get grown they left and went up north. That's why there's so many people, you know, up north because they would leave and get a
job cause they wasn't no jobs here.

SS: When they would come back and visit would they be considered different people when they'd come back. Were they living a different kind of life?

TN: Well, yeah, they would, you know, maybe talk different and just act different.

DW: They'd be glad to see them.

SS: They'd be glad to see them.

DW: Yeah, they'd be glad to see them. Want to know how things going with them and they were glad that they had made a better life for themselves, you know.

TN: A lot of times they'd be dressed nice and driving a car, you know. They had got up there and got a job. And I know a long time ago, you know, they'd be talking about they were working for Ford, you know, that made cars. And Chrysler and Cadillac, you know. I knowed some of them that went and got jobs at Cadillac, you know. Good jobs.

DW: We just talked the time up.

TN: I didn't know it's twelve o'clock.

END OF INTERVIEW