Interview with Chris Young, Sr.

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Yazoo City (Miss.)

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Dixon: Would you please state your full name and date of birth?


Dixon: Mr. Young, where were you born?

Young: Born in Yazoo County, out in a place they call Short Creek.

Dixon: Was that a plantation?

Young: It was a farm, yeah. The house I was born in was a big house with a porch all the way across the front. It had two rooms upstairs. My daddy moved in the house where the farm owner used to stay before he moved to town, so we had a pretty big house. We didn't use the upstairs rooms, though, but we only used downstairs.
We didn't have running water. We had cisterns in that day, and the cistern was built into the back porch under the roof, with the gutters coming in and water coming in from the roof into the cistern. When you got ready to get some water, you didn't have to go outdoors. You go out of the kitchen out on the back porch and lower your bucket and get your water. A cistern. You know, it's a bricked-up thing, you know, a hole in the ground bricked up that rainwater catches in, that type thing.

So that's where I was born in 1927. My father was somewhat of a sharecropper. My daddy was more or less, I'd say, a peddler. He grew vegetables and sold them, you know, most likely. He didn't raise much cotton. He had a little cotton, but not much. If he made a bale and a half of cotton, he was doing 100. But he was in town two or three times a week selling vegetables, like spinach and onions and greens, butter beans, string beans, that type of stuff, you know, vegetables he raised in the garden.

And they sold milk in those days. My mama would send in eggs and butter. That was her part of it, you know, what she would do for her money. She would send milk. You could sell buttermilk in town. You didn't have all these restrictions that you have now and things. She'd sell buttermilk. She sold butter. And chickens. You'd put a little coup on the wagon and have the live chickens. People would buy live fryers and kill them themselves like that, and he would sell that. Sometimes he
would have blackberries or something you'd pick and sell.

He'd sell most anything back in those days. It wasn't no checks in that day. You didn't get no welfare checks or nothing like that. The old people had to depend on their children to see after them when they got old and that type of thing.

The person that owned the land my daddy stayed on, we didn't see him but once a year when he'd come out there to get his portion of the corn or whatever, the share of the crop that was raised. So when he'd come out and do that, we didn't see him no more. So my father, he raised right smart of stuff. We had plenty to eat. We didn't have much money, because things were too cheap, but we had plenty to eat and all like that.

My brothers, when they finished high school, several of them went down to Alcorn. My oldest brother went to Alcorn. He didn't finish, but he stayed down there. When my father died, one of my brothers was down at Alcorn. He came home. See, in late years Mama was always interested in her children going to school. My mama married when she was fourteen years old, and she had fourteen children. She had varicose veins in her legs. She couldn't do much, like no field work or nothing. She stayed at the house all the time. But she was real interested. She couldn't read and write. My daddy could. But she was interested in the children going to school. That was one of her main things. She kept on at my daddy until finally he decided to hang it up and come on to town. The year he moved to town, moved us to town, when we started to school, he [unclear] gather
the crop, and when he came in, he died.

My brother was at Alcorn at the time, Alcorn College down there. He came home and took over and started paying. Things was real cheap back then. Grown men, professional--my brother took up painting in college. He was a house painter, interior decorator, house painter, all that stuff. They made 25 cents an hour.

When I was a little boy going to school, I worked right here at this house, this house where I'm staying now, where Dr. Dilworth [phonetic] stayed here and his wife and his mother-in-law. His mother-in-law did all the cooking. She was an old Indian-looking lady. Josephine Gibbs and Jim Gibbs, they owned all this hill up here. Up there where the St. Francis is, all of that they bought from them and on up that line.

He was a dentist in town, Dr. Dilworth was, and, see, I worked here for 35 cents a week. I was going to school. I'd carry a pail of buttermilk from here out to Dr. Fuller's [phonetic] house out there by the school, and pick up the bucket in the evening, the pail in the evening, and bring it back here. Then I'd go on and put my books up and come back down here and get in wood. She had a wood stove and a gas stove. She cooked on the wood all the time. She would polish the top of her stove. It looked just like marble. She'd take a steel wool and scrub the top of that stove every day. That'd turn it red and shiny.

My job was to take the ashes out of the stove, take the ash
pan out and empty it, and lay the fire for the next morning. All she had to do was strike a match to it. That was every evening after school I did that. On Saturday, I'd come down and run errands over town to the store and like that, and Saturday evening I'd get that 35 cents. That was big money in a kid's pocket then. You couldn't hardly eat a dime worth of candy. Twenty-five silver bells for a nickel, five for a penny, the big ones. Baby Ruth was a nickel and a dime a bar and that type of thing. So things was cheap, really.

My daddy died, and, see, my mother, she wasn't able to work, so my brother came home from Alcorn and he went to painting and he supported us, you know, the best he could. Then they built St. Francis Catholic School over here. I was going out to the public school, but then it was right across the street from my mama's house. I didn't have money to pay tuition to go there. Of course, [unclear] was 15 cents a week, and tuition I don't think was--I don't know. Do you remember what it was? It wasn't much. So they gave me a job cleaning. They had outdoor privies at the school when they first opened. They didn't have water closets. They didn't have running water, toilets. They had outdoor privies.

Dixon: At St. Francis?

Young: Yeah, when it first started. My job was to scrub them out, keep them clean, sweep them out and keep them clean and put
in—they didn't use toilet tissue. They had the Sears Roebuck catalog cut into quarters. They had those crayon boxes tacked against the wall to put that in. That just fit. A quarter of a Sears Roebuck catalog just fit in that chalk box. It was a wood chalk box. It wasn't paper like they are now. You'd tack them to the wall, see, and put it in like that. So that's what I did for my tuition money all the way through high school.

I didn't have too much dealing with white folks, other than the sisters. They were all white, all the sisters over there that taught school. There wasn't any blacks over there. They were all white sisters, and we had a white priest at the time from Holland [phonetic].

When I finished high school, I went to Tougaloo College. You know, it's north of Jackson over there on 55, on Caroline Road, if you want to call it that. My brother stayed in Jackson. I stayed with him and went up on the bus every day. The college had a bus come downtown and pick up students and bring them out and bring them back in the evening, after the library closed at night. That's what I did the first year, I stayed at my brother's.

The second year, I went on the campus. They had what they called a five-year plan, where you could go to school and graduate in five years. But I already had my freshman year finished, but I was staying in town. So I went up that summer and worked on the campus. My check came down from New York just like the teachers' did. I got $75 a month.
Dixon: From where?

Young: See, Tougaloo is a church-affiliated school. I've forgotten now just what church it was, but the headquarters were in New York. Miss Eastman was one of the benefactors of the college, you know, Eastman Kodak Company. Miss Eastman, she'd come down, and you'd see some cleaning up go on, straightening up when she'd come down. They got a section of the library named after her. What she'd tell them to do, she'd see something and say, "You need so-and-so." She didn't have to ask nobody, because she had money enough to tend to it herself. She'd say, "Go get a estimate of what it costs and send it to me." They'd do that, she'd pay for it. She was one of the great benefactors.

Millsaps in Jackson was a school for whites. See, blacks and whites didn't go to school together back in those days. We had half white professors at Tougaloo because that was part of the regulation. We had white professors and black professors, teachers, but that was one of the things with the school, with the church group that I guess was sponsoring it that it had to be. Sometimes we'd get teachers who retired in the North and they'd come down here and spend a while teaching and like that.

So we had black teachers and white teachers. My math teacher, Ms. Bowman, was a distant relative cousin to Joseph Priestley, you know, who discovered oxygen. You remember that in science.
I worked in the summer. I stayed there all the time. I didn't come home in the summer when school was out. I went to summer school and worked, and when my class came back in the fall of the year, I had gone to summer school, I was right up with them. See, when you're on that five-year plan, you work a half a day and go to school a half a day. The first semester, if I worked in the morning, I went to school in the evening. Then the next semester, I would switch that around and work in the evening and take the morning classes that I missed the first semester. So when my class came back the next year, I was right up with them. I didn't fall behind. So I graduated in 1951 with my class I started with. But I stayed the extra year because I tried to get in medical school and didn't. Then I came home and went to teaching school in the county, Yazoo County.

I never had too much dealings with white people, to tell you the truth. Of course, white was white and black was black. That was understood. I was never one in the streets and out and all into nothing, so I didn't never have no problems, you know what I mean, get in jail or nothing like that.

Dixon: Do you remember the moment that you realized that black was black and white was white? Was there a particular minute?

Young: Oh, that was from the beginning. You knew that. See, your parents taught you that.
Dixon: What did they tell you?

Young: They told you to--you know, back in those days, black people had a place to be, you know what I mean. You didn't venture out into like a white restaurant or something. You didn't go up there looking to be served. You didn't do that. That was only during the Civil Rights Movement that kind of stuff started.

Before that, you didn't have no problem, because nobody went up in there. Everybody took for granted you just segregated yourself. If that was a white establishment, I would have no business up in there. So I don't go. I go to a black cafe or whatever it is to eat, that type thing. You didn't have that. It was so instilled in you from birth, that's something you just didn't do. So I didn't have any problem with that, because I never did go to them to be turned out or kicked out or anything like that. So I didn't have any problems.

Dixon: Did you ever feel like you were treated like a second-class citizen?

Young: Well, yeah. Once you get to know that your money was supposed to spend just like anybody else's, you realized that. But see, the service wasn't broken, so you didn't shake the water. You just get along with what was, you know, the status
quo. See, that's the way that went, until the later years, until the Civil Rights Movement came in, after the war, really.

During the Second World War, soldiers went off to war and they came back. They had been in other countries and things like that, so new ideas were brought back into the community, that type of thing.

**Dixon:** Where were you—you lived--

**Young:** I was born out on Short Creek, out in the county. It wasn't in the Yazoo City proper.

**Dixon:** How old were you when your father moved?

**Young:** Six years old. I never went to school in the country. They used to have school in the church houses, you know. You'd walk to the church house where you went to church, and they had the one-teacher classroom, where the teacher taught one through six or eight or whatever it was, one teacher at that school. The bigger school that had more students, sometimes they had two teachers.

But I never went to that. My brothers went to that, but I was too young. See, I just started to school once my daddy moved my mama and us to Yazoo City. See, I started school here. I didn't go. I started in the public school. It was a black school, Indy Taylor [phonetic] High School, because they had one
through twelve there. That's where I started school through the fifth grade.

The sixth grade, I started up here at St. Francis. From six through twelve, all my teachers were white, and from kindergarten through fifth, all my teachers were black, because I went to the public school. And in Tougaloo, that's from twelve to sixteen, half of my teachers were white and half were black.

So that's how I got my education. I learned a lot of stuff, because all these sisters or nuns were from the North. It was the Sisters of St. Francis from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. That's where the headquarters was. So I got a little learning from people that had been places other than here, you know what I'm talking about? I realize that. That was helpful. You didn't have an all-black perspective. And see, I studied the teachers as much as I did the lesson.

Dixon: What do you mean?

Young: See how they think. I've always been interested in how white people think. They were real nice and everything. A priest taught me to drive, drive a car and all those kind of things. They helped me when I needed help.

I was poor, and they had used clothes sales up there that these folks would ship down trunks of clothes from the North and have them in a used clothes sale. That's where I'd get most of
my things, from that, because I wasn't able to--you know, my mama wasn't able to work. My brother just worked. He could afford to--and my daddy paid down on the house. When they sold that farm equipment and stuff he had, mules, horses, and all of that, they paid the house off. Things wasn't high back in those days. Five hundred dollars would build you a new shotgun house, three-room house, one room right behind the other. That's what you call a shotgun house, lock and key job, $500, lumber, labor, and all. But who had $500? See, that's where the problem was.

Just like now. The average person has a job. He could pay a monthly house note. But you've got to have some honest money up front, a down payment to pay the realtor, the lawyers, the closing costs, and all that kind of stuff. See, that can run up into money. You might have enough money to meet your monthly note every month, but if you don't have that up-front money for closing costs, you can't buy a house. You have to rent. You never get out of that category. You got to save some money in order to pay that down payment, then start paying those monthly notes. You might be making salary enough to pay a monthly note, but you don't have that up-front money that takes to get into that unless you've saved it up. A lot of people don't have money. With us, sometimes money burns our pockets and you have to spend it.

Dixon: So your father bought a house.
Young: Yeah.

Dixon: It was over at the school?

Young: Yeah, right up in the next block up there.

Dixon: Have you lived in this neighborhood all your life?

Young: Yeah, since I moved to town. From six years old on, I've been on this street.

Dixon: How has this neighborhood changed over the years?

Young: Well, it's been pretty much the same. Everybody knew everybody, but here lately a few new folks have moved in further up the street that I don't know. But back when I was here--see, back when I was a kid, there wasn't no TV, no TV or nothing like that, very few radios and fewer telephones. The only telephone on this street was at this house.

Dixon: Dr. Dilworth's?

Young: Yeah. And 342 was the number. You had to get the operator when you wanted to call somebody. You couldn't dial. You didn't have that dialing. You just had a phone, and when they'd ask "Number, please," you'd give them 342. The lady
taught me here to use the phone. She'd tell me to go call somebody, Reverend Wheaton [phonetic] or pastor or somebody, tell them something, and she'd listen when I'd make the call. I'd say "678," or whatever the number was, and she'd holler, "Please." You had to say please to satisfy her. They'd say, "Number, please." That's what the operator would say. You'd say, "678." But she'd say, "Say 678, please."

Dixon: This is Mrs. Dilworth?

Young: Mrs. Gibbs. Dilworth was Dr. Dilworth's wife, but her mother was Mrs. Gibbs, Josephine Gibbs. They stayed at this house. This was a two-story house years ago, but it burned and they only built back one story. After all the property got away, Mrs. Dilworth willed me this house, to her aunt. She left and went to Detroit, so I rented from her until it got time to pay the taxes, and then she just sent me the papers and told me to have it. So I got this house. I spent a lot of money on it, but it wasn't in this shape when I got it, you know what I mean. I spent a lot of money on this house. It needs a lot of more fixing. But that's how I came by this house.

Dixon: How long ago was that?

Young: Oh, I started to teach school in '52, '53 out in the county, Linwood High School [phonetic]. It was East Yazoo High
School then, but they changed the name to Linwood in later years. That's when I got out of college. That's the first job I had in the county teaching school. A hundred and fifty dollars a month was the salary of a college graduate, and they took out retirement and all this stuff out of it. You ended up with about $135-36 take-home money behind that. That wouldn't pay a car note now. But things weren't high back then. A loaf of bread was a dime. A pop was a nickel. Now a pop is 50 cents.

Dixon: Given the low prices, was it hard to make ends meet?

Young: Yes, indeed, because you didn't make it--I'm telling you now, grown men, I mean professional men were making 25 cents an hour, but anything less than that was making 10 cents an hour. You worked ten hours a day for a dollar, and five days a week, that's $5.00. You worked till dinner on Saturday, that's five and a half. If you had five, six children, a wife, five, six children, and had to pay renting a house, all that had to come out of that. Things wasn't expensive, but you didn't have no money. That's where the problem was. You didn't make any money. That's why things couldn't--if they had been expensive, you couldn't live. So that's how that was. I made 35 cents a week here, and I finally got a raise at 50 cents a week.

Dixon: That's when you were working for--
Young: For these people that was right here, Dr. Dilworth's mother-in-law, Mrs. Gibbs. I worked for his mother-in-law. She did all the cooking. He gave her so much money every month to take care of the groceries and stuff like that. She did all the cooking, and she was a cook. That woman know she could cook.

I worked here around for all those years. See, that tree there on the corner was just that big when I was a little old boy, and there's a root under this house bigger around than I am. When I tore this off, this was a wood porch. I tore it off and built this concrete porch. I saw something and I said, "That's a board in the ground. It ain't going to do nothing but cause termites." I took my shoe to hit it to knock it up out of the ground, and I skinned that green bark off that root. The root was big around as me, a root like that. That's why that tree didn't fall. It's got roots that go all back under this.

This is that Yazoo clay. In summertime when it gets hot and dry, that dirt cracks open. You can stick your hand down in the ground in them cracks. But when it rains, it closes back up. Yazoo clay they call that.

Dixon: You said this neighborhood hasn't seen many changes. Were the roads paved when you first came?

Young: No, no, gravel. All this was gravel coming on up through here. No, that happened in later years. That was
gravel when St. Francis built up that school there. All that was gravel. They paved it. Where that church is up on the corner, that was a high bank up there. They used to have fields up on top on there. When they bought it, see the bulldozers pushed all that dirt back and leveled that down, you see. That give them more room in the back. Low places, they filled it in.

Dixon: Did the houses look like they do today? How did the houses look?

Young: Pretty much the same. Where that house is there, that was these people's garden. Mrs. Gibbs had a garden out there. There wasn't no house there. But then after they sold lots, they had some lots in the back down this way they sold, lot sold, lot sold, and they finally sold that lot to a man [unclear]. He came to town and built a house there and moved there. But that was her garden, and Dr. Dilworth's garage was sitting back kind of back of that house back in there. You go back to about the back of that house by the garage in those days.

But we had a hard time. I came up on the rough side of the mountain. I had to work little jobs and things. I used to peddle a little vegetables myself. We had a garden behind the house. Mama would bunch up greens and radishes and onions and stuff like that, and I'd go down before I'd go to school in the morning and peddle them, and then come back and go to school.
We had to do all those kind of things to make it. But I made it. Got old. Now I'm back to childhood again. If you can help it, don't get old. Stay young if you can.

Dixon: After the fifth grade, did you go to St. Francis?

Young: I went to St. Francis in the sixth grade, sixth through twelfth. One through five was out at the public school.

Dixon: What do you remember about that school?

Young: Well, it's a lady taught me—they called it primer back there then, primer, first grade, second, and on up. Now what do they call that?

Dixon: Kindergarten.

Young: Kindergarten type thing, which was primer. A lady taught me primer school was Miss McGee, and she ended up down at Alcorn. She was a professor at Alcorn College. The last time I went down there for a science meeting, went to school down there in the summer under the National Science Foundation, and I met her down there. She taught me in primer here at Yazoo City.

Dixon: Would you consider this to be the hills or the Delta?
Young: Hills. Yazoo City is the gateway to the Delta. When you go downtown, this is 49 over here, the second street over. That's Broadway. It comes from Jackson on through Yazoo City on to Belzoni. That's the highway, really, Highway 49 West. East goes back up this way towards the chemical plant. Out here at Four Point [phonetic], it splits off and go that way and come on through here. Now, this Broadway over here is really the Highway 49. It comes on through Yazoo City. See, when you get across the railroad, things go to flattening out. We call Yazoo City the gateway to the Delta. You take 3 South, you go down to Vicksburg. Down 3 South will carry you to Vicksburg, and you go on up to Belzoni, Louise, Belzoni, Silver City, going on up 49 this way, Clarksdale, on up the road.

Dixon: What would you consider to be the main differences between—you lived in the hills. What was the difference between the hills and the Delta in those days?

Young: Well, you didn't have to worry about no flood. If water gets this high, you might as well try to find you a Noah's Arc. But in the Delta, a lot of people, when they had a lot of rain and the rivers would rise and spread out over the fields, they had to get out. They had to come to town to live till that water went down before they could go back. But see, you didn't have to worry about no high water up here on this hill.

Water came in the town down as far as the railroad down
there. After you're going on out of town, you cross the railroad tracks. Water was on the other side of the railroad, right up to the railroad there. And the houses going out, they had to be built up on kind of stilts like. Water was all around. You could sit on your porch and fish. Then they had poles and walkway to go from the house out to the street. The street was always built a little high, but see, the houses, them houses that was sitting down in there, they were fully covered with water. But after they saw about that flood, they started building them houses up high kind of level with the highway, and then you had to walk to get to the road. Didn't many folks have no cars back then. When I stayed in the country, out in the county, you'd hear a car [unclear], you'd go a half a mile to get to look down at the road to see it pass by.

Dixon: I've had people tell me that life was easier for black people in the hills and I've had people say that life was easier for black people in the Delta.

Young: Well, you see, Delta was just a big open space. Cotton was king. Hill people had kind of diversified stuff. They'd raise vegetables, watermelon. They did a lot of peddling, food stuffs, like that. Hill land was not as conducive to cotton as the Delta, the flat land, so you had to have something else going for you. Some of them had a little cattle and stuff like that in the hills. My daddy had all these hogs, cows, and that
type of thing, horses.

**Dixon:** I know a lot of people in the Delta did like bootlegging on the side.

**Young:** Well, they did that in the hills, too. They did a little bootlegging. See, back in the early, there wasn't no drugs like we got this stuff going now. There wasn't no drugs. People drank a little homemade wine, little stomach juice that they'd make in the woods, and that type thing. But you didn't have all this drug stuff that you have now.

The biggest problem with what's happening now is that when they integrated these schools, they cut out the paddle. They cut the paddle out when they integrated the schools, because I guess they didn't want black teachers to be whooping white children, I guess. That seemed to be the thing. So then they started not letting—children started child abuse. You couldn't whoop your own children. Put you in jail for whooping your own children. Before that happened, you didn't have all this stuff they got going now. See, all this stuff came out of that.

**Dixon:** Came out of integration?

**Young:** Yeah, because, see, when they integrated, where white and black would be going to school together, they cut out that paddle altogether. They ruled that out. And if you can't put a
paddle on a kid, he does what he want to do, you can't raise him. That's the problem. And all these drugs and things that's coming in.

It wasn't none of that back then in those days. The only thing they had to get a little drink was maybe a little homemade wine or a little homemade whiskey, corn whiskey, and maybe a beer if they had the money. You didn't have enough money to do a whole lot of drinking, unless you made it yourself. That's the reason they made homemade wine, you know, from fruit, grapes, wild grapes and muscadine. The muscadine grape, you know, is native to Mississippi. It grows well in Mississippi.

They used to have wineries around, but they all played out. I think we've got one winery in Jackson now. They opened up not too long ago, where they make wine. Down here in Vicksburg, they're going to put up a distillery to make liquors. They were selling shares in it and all. I didn't buy any shares in it, so I don't know whether it materialized or not.

Dixon: You were telling me about some negative impacts of integration. When you were growing up, before integration—take this neighborhood, for instance. I'm kind of assuming this, but did your neighbors take responsibility for you and watch out and see what you were up to and tell your parents?

Young: Oh, yes, sir. See, back in those days, any grown person would whoop you if they caught you doing something wrong. It
don't have to be your parents. And then you didn't tell your parents. See, we lived in the rural when I was little, and the grown people only saw each other on Sunday when they met at church. Otherwise, you know, the houses were way far apart. You're not close to nobody like around here in town, a house next door. You had to go two or three miles to somebody's house.

Well, see, on church they'd all meet up there and she'd say, "Mrs. Young, I saw your son at such and such a place doing such and such a thing, and I got over to him." She'd say, "Thank you." And when you got from church, she wanted to know why did that lady have to whoop you or that man, what were you doing. Then you got another one behind that. So that kept things in line. Now a kid go home and tell his mama the teacher whooped me, the parents will go out there and want to kill the teacher. They didn't have that back there then.

Dixon: And that worked out--

Young: That worked out fine.

Dixon: In the country. When you came to town, was it the same way?

Young: Well, the city wasn't quite as--see, I taught school in the county. Kids in the county were not quite as bad as
children in town. Of course, the children in town wasn't nothing like now, though, nothing like now. But out in the country, parents, when they spoke, the children heard them. You didn't have no problem with that. I always taught in high school. I didn't teach in the grade school. I taught high school. I taught science in the high school, chemistry, biology, physics, math, and that type thing.

Dixon: What year did you start teaching?

Young: '52-53. I graduated from college in '51. I went to school an extra year trying to get in medical school, but I didn't get in. So that next school year, '52-53, I started teaching school in the county, in Yazoo County.

Of course, now, I painted. See, with $150 a month, you didn't have much slack, and so I did paint work. I painted houses and finished sheetrock and all that kind of stuff. The fellow I worked for, he worked for a building contractor here in town, so he'd hire me to help him. He did the painting of the house, the fellows built them, and then we used to finish the sheetrock. Then they got a company out of Jackson that finished that sheetrock, and all we had to do was the painting. So then we went to that. I painted. I worked my way through college with a paintbrush and doing whatever necessary, doing a little carpentry work and whatever. They bought a 60-foot extension ladder for me to paint the steeple on the chapel there in
Tougaloo.

**Dixon:** So you painted, you used that for extra money through college and then even after when you started teaching?

**Young:** Yeah. You had to have a supplement.

**Dixon:** Did all the teachers have a supplement?

**Young:** You have to do something, yeah. Teachers now can get the salary over twelve months, but if I spread my salary out over twelve months, $150 a month, that's $1,800 a year. Spread it out over twelve months. See, I was getting that for nine months, $150 a month for nine months. That would be $900, and $950 would be $250, wouldn't it? That would be $1,150.

**Dixon:** I see what you're saying.

**Young:** In other words, I got all my pay in nine months while school was going on. That was $150 month. But I added four more months in that deal for the summertime. They first started to having eight months school. Then they went from eight to nine months school. The teachers that taught before that, like our little church school and things, they made $10, $11 a month. They had to stay out in the country with some of the parents that had children in school. So it was a tough life any way you
Dixon: You mentioned earlier about some cafes. Were there many black businesses in town?

Young: There was a few. They had one pretty nice place, the Legion Cafe [phonetic]. They had a barbershop with it and all that. That was pretty nice.

Dixon: Was it black owned?

Young: Yeah, it was black-owned cafe and barbershops and things like that. See, blacks didn't go to the white barbershops and the whites didn't come to the black barbershops. Everybody went to his own, you know, like that. They had black shops. They had these little cafes, and they had some of them cafes, like big places on the corner downtown, where black and white would go in. They had a section there for blacks to sit and eat and a section for white. You know, they had it segregated. You could do that if you wanted to. But I just always went to the black places. There wasn't nothing there but black.

Dixon: What about your marketing? Where did you do your marketing, like grocery stores and such? Were there any black-owned grocery stores?
Young: There was one up on this hill had a little black grocery store, and one was over on Yazoo Street, Arthur McKenny [phonetic]. He was blind. He ran a store over there. And Laura Greene [phonetic] out here by the Sanctified Church [phonetic], she ran a little old store. But most of the time, we'd go to those places that had kind of discount prices, like the A&P and stuff like that. They had a food market down there. Ginny Joe [phonetic] wasn't in town then. They hadn't come to town. Sunflower, that came in later.

Dixon: Were you raising your own food here in town?

Young: We had a garden. Half of the lot behind the house, we had a garden. Mama had a garden back in the back, and I peddled a few vegetables out of that. So we made it. It was a tough time, but we managed to make it. I'm going to live to get a few weeks of being 100 years old, outlive my daddy by over fifty years. My daddy died at 51 years old. He was a diabetic. I'm a diabetic. They didn't have any insulin back in those days. They ordered mineral water from Arkansas for my daddy to drink, and some crazy water crystals, something like epsom salts they'd mix in it. What good that did, I don't know. I ask doctors about that now. They don't even know nothing about that.

Dixon: They gave him mineral water?
Young: Yeah. Like in Hot Springs, Arkansas, they had mineral baths. They got hot water coming out of the ground along the side. Everywhere you look, it's steaming, coming out of the ground, in Little Rock, Arkansas. I mean, not Little Rock, but Hot Springs. I was there once. I went there one time.

Dixon: Who was it that recommended this treatment for your father? Was it a doctor?

Young: Yeah, it was a doctor. We had a doctors. The L.T. Miller Center out there is named after Dr. Miller. And Dr. Fuller [phonetic], the Afro-American Sons and Daughters had a hospital out there, black hospital, and that's where the black doctors and the black folks went to the hospital.

Dixon: What about the health care that they didn't take to the hospital?

Young: Well, see, doctors used to make house calls back in those days. You'd call the doctor, and he'd come around to the house. But see, they cut that out. Now they tell you to meet them at the hospital or go to the hospital or go to their office. At night, used to tell you to go to the hospital. You know that thing about, "Take two aspirins and I'll see you in the morning"? That's what's happening now. No more of that deal about house calls and things. I saw it in the news here a
while back where one doctor somewhere was making house calls. That's something rare. They don't do that in the North. Send you to the hospital.

**Dixon:** Were people still doing their own health care, like home remedies?

**Young:** Yes, sir. You'd cut yourself, like you'd cut your finger, you put some coal oil on, kerosene on it, and it never got sore. You know, like you cut yourself and don't do nothing about it. The next day you can't hardly touch that thing. It's sore. It hurts. But that coal oil would cut that out. Like you cut yourself, to stop bleeding they'd get a little soot from up the chimney, that black carbon that's on the lining of the chimney from that wood burning. You put soot on it. That would coagulate that blood and make it form a scab and that type thing.

We had all kind of home remedies, use liniments. Some of the things they used, I don't know what about it, but they had such thing as hog hoof tea, hoofs they'd take off the hogs and make orange peel tea. Some places they had a little [unclear] tea. They'd put a little horse or cow bones on and boil it and give you the tea off of that. Now, I think for measles and stuff like that, it was the hot water. It wasn't what they was putting in it. I think the hot water brought the measles out on you.
Dixon: What would they use hog hoof tea for?

Young: I don't know what it was for. For tonsils, when your tonsils would swell, they'd make you eat sardines and they'd take that sardine oil and rub around your neck and under there.

Now, what that did, I don't know, but that was one of the remedies for that. Yeah, they had all kinds. Mullein tea, that little fuzzy leaf plant that grows, mullein. They'd have mullein tea and all that kind of stuff. Shuck tea, the shucks off of corn and boil it and make a tea.

I think mostly those teas, the heat that you would take in, and they'd take beef fat and make tallow and put it on a wool rag and rub your neck, like you had a cold, rub your chest with that and put a wool cloth to your chest, you know, with that beef tallow. It wasn't pork, it was beef. They'd take that pork fat, and when it get, it's solid like--it ain't quite hard as soap, but it's still. They'd rub you good with that and then put that wool rag, rub it on that wool rag and put it to you, fasten that thing to you to cut the cold, they say. They got all kind of home remedies out there.

Dixon: Say, for instance, you were making mullein tea. Would they put the leaves in there whole or would they ground them up?

Young: No, they put the leaves in there whole. They'd tear
them up to get them in the pot, but, see, the juice off them is what they wanted, boil it, take that juice and make your tea to drink from that. A lot of folks used to take it that had diabetes, used to get this Spanish moss that hangs in trees, boil that. I tried that, but I didn't stop taking my medicine. But it tastes almost like Lipton tea to me. You have to strain it through a cheesecloth or something to get all that little trash out of it, and it tastes pretty much like regular tea.

But one lady just swore by it. Every time she'd come up here out of Jackson and go to church down in the country, she'd gather up that moss and take it back. She said the doctor told her she was doing so well, you must be taking your medicine. The doctor had told her to take a certain medicine, and she said she stopped taking it and was using that. It fooled the doctor. That's what she said, now. Of course, she's dead now. I don't know how true that was, but she swore by it, by that, you see, so you just don't know.

[Begin Tape 1, Side 2]

**Dixon:** Did your family attend church?

**Young:** Yeah. My daddy and mama were Methodists, but then my mother joined St. Francis, the kids joined it and all, and we all became Catholics. What's your religious preference?
Dixon: Baptist.

Young: You're Baptist?

Dixon: St. Francis at the time, were there many blacks in the congregation?

Young: Well, this was all a black church. See, they had a white Catholic church and a white Catholic school, but being segregated, they opened up a black school.

Dixon: I understand. So the entire thing was black except for the staff?

Young: We started out with a white priest up here. We had several colored priests up here. Now we only have one priest in town. That's Father Curley from Ireland down at St. Mary's. He's the pastor of St. Mary's and St. Francis. We down to church down there if we want and we come up here. Our church is eight o'clock in the morning. Down there it's ten-thirty. And on Saturday evenings, it's six o'clock, I think. And we get along fine. We have no problems. They're just as nice as they can be when we go down there. They bent over backwards to be nice to you. Sometimes there'll be more white up here on Sunday morning than they do black.

So we've combined the congregations of the two churches.
We didn't have no problems. We had no kind of bad publicity or feeling or words between nobody. Everybody is just as nice as they can be. It's an ideal thing, really. Now, those that might not like it, I don't never get to seem them, probably. They probably don't come. It could be some that don't go for it, but I don't meet them. You don't miss what you never had. I can say they're real nice.

And even the integration of the school in Yazoo City we didn't have those problems. They started just a few blacks going to the white school, and then they increased it and on like that. We didn't have no like they had up at Arkansas with [Governor] Faubus and that confrontation. We had none of that here. The father used to be here in town, they I guess saw to that, you know, that we didn't have all that publicity stunt stirring and stuff like that. Everything went smooth. So we didn't have no problem with that.

**Dixon:** Things went pretty well, people got along pretty well. Do you remember any particular controversies in the community?

**Young:** No, until that civil rights stuff came up. During that time, you got a little stuff. During the boycott time, the blacks boycotted the white business and that type thing, so we had that. That's the reason I had my house shot into. See, the person who stayed up the hill farther, who was kind of running the boycott like, he was the leader of the thing, he's dead now.
Dixon: What was his name?

Young: Rudy Shields. He was head of that. See, I always eat breakfast early, like five o'clock. My wife went back there to fix breakfast, and she came back and told me breakfast was ready. I got up, and when I opened the bedroom door to the hall--see, I had heard a motor come down that hill and stop at the corner. I could hear the motor running. When I opened my door, that threw a light across to the living room side where they could see over there. They could the lights through that window, and they shot in there three times with a shotgun.

I went and told Rudy Shields, and he called the FBI out of Vicksburg. But when the FBI came, they brought the city attorney here in Yazoo City, the police detective, and all these folks in the police department. I don't know to yet who shot in my house. They ain't told me nothing. I never did find out. So that's as close as I've been to the controversy.

Dixon: When did that happen?

Young: During that first boycott. I don't know what year that was.

Dixon: It was in the fifties or sixties?
Young: The boycott was in the sixties, wasn't it? Father O'Leary was here at the time. I think it was in the sixties. I think it was.

Dixon: Before that time, there weren't really any, there wasn't much--

Young: No, it wasn't. See, that's what they call these people coming out of the North, like Cheney and those folks over there in Neshoba County. You heard about that. They were called rebel-rousers. But I guess the people that lived here was too subdued or too scared to take over to start that, so somebody else had to come in and instigate it, you know, and you had to follow that type of thing.

It was real successful, because a lot of businesses downtown fold up. The black people are the only ones that spend everything they make. Saving is a foreign word to black people. I make $5.00, I spend $5.00.

Back in those days, to tell you just how it was, nobody worked in those stores, the dry good stores, grocery stores, offices downtown, but the white ladies. They made $12 to $15 a week. They could hire a black cook to come to the house in the morning and fix breakfast, wash the breakfast dishes, clean up the house, make up the beds, wash and iron the clothes, and have dinner ready when they come home to dinner, and then they'd go home and come back and fix supper. See, they made $2.00, $2.50
Well, see, a woman working downtown, she could take $2.50 of the $12 or $13 and pay somebody to do all her home work, see after the children while she stayed out all day for that $2.50, and if anybody paid $3.00, that was a good job. They wasn't making much money either, but they wasn't paying nothing to the people doing their home work for them. They did all of that. So that's why I'm saying, they had a chance to get ahead. We wasn't making nothing, and, see, you couldn't get no job down there working and making that $10 and $12 a week like she was. You had to go for that $2.00, $2.50, and had to raise your family on that. The man was working. Then the woman would make that much. It was just nothing to do but get ahead. For a white person to be poor was his own fault. See, that's how that was.

You know what a taxi cab was in town here when they first had cabs here? Ten cents. Carry you all over town, anywhere you wanted to go, 10 cents to carry you and 10 cents to bring you. We didn't have that. I had to walk way out across to school and anywhere this lady sent me to get something. She'd tell me to go way out there in Newton to West 2nd, somewhere out in there, go by Laura Green's [phonetic] store and get her two cans of Eatwell [phonetic] for her cats and tell me to stop by Ginny Jones [phonetic] down there on Main Street to pick up something, get a roast or something, that red sockeye salmon. That was expensive back in them days. Get a couple of cans of
that and come on by this store up here on Jefferson Street and get her some chicken chops. I'd bring all that home. That was part of my job. Sometimes she'd give me an extra nickel or dime and sometimes she'd just give me my regular salary. So it was tough.

One thing about it, you knew where you stood here. Now, in the North, it was a different thing. You were supposed to be equal and all that, but they give you the menial jobs, the poorest paying jobs, keep money out of your hand. See, that all goes on in the North in the big cities. They don't have to associate with you because you ain't got no money. You can't go. When they started integrating here, the blacks come through the civil rights marches and things and want to stop in those white cafes to eat a steak. Well, see, they wasn't able to do that. They just stopped fighting it and said, "Come on in." And as soon as they let them in and starting charging $7.00 and $8.00 for a steak dinner, you didn't have that nowhere else. That was nonexistent. You didn't have to fight it. Just open it up. But see, the finances segregated you. You were segregated by finance. That's they way they did it in the North. You might have a right to go in there, but if you can't afford it, you stay out of there. That's the way it is all up the country, up in the North and everywhere.

Dixon: Did you ever consider living up there?
Young: No, not really. I married in Chicago. Of course, my wife was from here. I went up there and married. But my mother was old, and I kind of stayed around here to see after her. But those big towns were somewhat, looked like big dirty towns. I know folks stayed up there in little one-room kitchenettes and things like that, something about the size of a closet with a stove, sitting up there and cook in that room, and plaster was breaking out and dingy and that kind of stuff. I had a brother stayed in Chicago. He opened up a little dress shop there out on 63rd, I believe it was. But I didn't never have no desire to live up there. I came on back here.

Dixon: How long were you up there?

Young: I didn't stay up there. I just went up there and got married, because, see, my wife and I went to school up here at St. Francis. We were classmates. After school was out, she went North. She had some sisters and brothers up there. She went up there and got a job. When I come out of Tougaloo, I went up there and we got married, and she came back here. So we've been in the South all this time since then. She worked in Chicago at Montgomery Ward before I married her, when I was going to school.

Dixon: You said that before the Civil Rights Movement, things were pretty calm.
Young: Yeah, before the Civil Rights Movement, because there was nobody to shake the water, you know what I'm talking about. You knew where you stood. If you did anything out of the ordinary, you were going to get lynched. Nobody wanted to be lynched, so they didn't do it. So that type of thing.

Dixon: I was going to ask you, what was the level of racial violence in those days?

Young: Oh, it was rough if you made it so. You'd get hung in a minute.

Dixon: By who?

Young: Any of the white folks to be. Anybody, the folks that you had got into with, their friends and things would come get you and hang you. You didn't have no help. Blacks didn't stick together to help one another. One white man could go out there among a thousand blacks and pick out one and hang him, and the rest stand there looking. They were scared, that type thing. See, that's no more.

Dixon: People didn't work together before the movement?

Young: No, no, no. That's the first thing that brought blacks
together, during that movement, you see. Blacks now are getting rough. They kill one another, and they kill a white quick as they will a black. That kind of cut that out, them bearing down on us, like that. They find out you'd fight back, that cut out. See, they could come and kill you and live. But now they got to bring life to get life, they don't want that. You come kill me, but I'm going to kill you. They don't want that. I can come kill you, but don't you kill me. When it got so they started fighting back, that cut that out. He had to bring life to get life, bring his to get yours. That's the way it is now. So they didn't have no problem with that. Back in the old days, they didn't have that. It was a one-way thing. White was right. If you're white, you're right. If you're brown, stick around. But if you're black, get back.

Dixon: Did that happen to anybody you know?

Young: No. My mama told me one time my daddy came to town and some black had done something to some white. He said on the way back going out in the country in the wagon and the mules and things, the road was just full of white folks. This crowd, they wouldn't get back and let him through. He had to stop his wagon and mules and sit there, till somebody in the crowd knew my daddy and he told him, "Let Solver [phonetic] on by there. He's a good nigger. He ain't been into nothing. Let him go on home to his family." So they let him go on through.
But see, they were waiting there to hang a fellow, a black they caught into something. That's what they were looking for out there. They knew my daddy, and he never was in any trouble or anything like that, so they didn't bother him. If you had somebody that stood for something in that crowd, they could speak for you and save you, that type thing.

Dixon: You mentioned that black people didn't work together too much in that time? Did they share amongst themselves?

Young: Oh, yeah. For instance, everybody had a milk cow. You know what I mean, they milked the cow. Sometimes when the cow would go dry--you know, a cow goes dry before she has another calf, and she wouldn't have any milk. So the neighbors would know that she didn't have milk. They would send milk and butter over there to her house, the neighbors would. If they had a cow that had plenty milk, they'd send it to the neighbor, send the kids, "Take this over there to so-and-so." Butter, milk, stuff like that, they shared that kind of stuff. Molasses, if they had more molasses than they needed, they'd send you some over there. They shared among each other. Yeah, they did that.

Dixon: Was this in the country?

Young: Yeah, in the country.
Dixon: What about when you came to Yazoo City?

Young: Well, see, people in town didn't have too much of that. They were working on these little public jobs. They wasn't raising no milk cow. We brought our cow to town. We had it put up in the pasture. But we didn't have but one cow and we didn't have that much milk, because we had five or six in the family to drink it up. But out in the country, we had a bunch of cows. They'd milk all them cows, and they had more milk and butter than they knew what to do with.

They didn't have no freezers back in those days. You come to town to get you a little piece of ice on the weekend, wrap it up in gunny sacks and sawdust and stuff like that to hold until you get home. They had them iceboxes, put that ice in the top of it and put your stuff down in the bottom, and that cold air goes down, you know, around that ice, goes down and keeps your box cool. They put a jar of water up there beside the ice for drinking water, sit it up there right against the ice and put that sacks and stuff over it to keep it, called iceboxes. They didn't have no refrigerators back then, these folks in the country didn't. The folks in town, it wasn't but a few of them had them. The ice man used to come around up to the corner there every day. You'd meet him down there and get you a piece of ice to take home. I think you paid a dime or 15 cents for a block of ice, tie a [unclear] around it, you carry it home and put it in your icebox, or wrap it up in sawdust and gunny sacks,
put you a bottle of water in there by it, you have some cool drinking.

That's one thing about cisterns in the country. That water would be down underground. It would be cool. You could draw up some water, and it was cool, just like it had been in the refrigerator. In the Delta, they had those pumps. They'd drive down. That water was cold when it come out of the ground, but nasty and bitter. It set there. It would turn yellow and stain that bucket yellow. Sulfur, you know, in that water. It was rough tasting in the Delta. They had cisterns, mostly, in the hills, you know. They'd dig a big hole and then brick it up with brick.

Dixon: So in town, most people were doing public work, and there wasn't too much sharing going on.

Young: No, it wasn't too much sharing going on, other than church members that'd meet at church and that type of thing and stuff like that. But out on the country, you see, your houses are way far apart. You had to hitch up the wagon to go to somebody's house. You didn't walk over to somebody's house. It was a pretty good piece. Or ride your saddle horse to go to somebody's house. That's the way they did back then.

Dixon: You said the adults would see them on the weekends, right?
Young: Yeah, at church. See, church was a general thing for everybody.

Dixon: Where would the children see each other? In school?

Young: Yeah, they'd see each other in school. They had schools, you know, but you had to walk to school, you see. So they would walk to school and they'd see each other, the children would. But, see, the grown folks wouldn't see each other until on Sundays when they go to church, that type of thing.

Dixon: You started teaching school in '52-53. What were those schools like in those days? You were in high schools?

Young: I taught in the high school, yeah. That was a new built high school. I was one of the first teachers that went there to that high school. I was a science teacher. I taught chemistry, biology, physics, math, general science, all the sciences. I taught that.

We started out with nothing. We didn't have nothing to start with but just that room, and didn't have all the tables and things in there with that. I had a desk with water on it and all that stuff. So I had to start to ordering chemistry. They told me to go and see what I needed for the laboratory for,
I think, physics, chemistry, biology, and general science, make me up a list of stuff that I needed for all that.

So I went in. I was right from Tougaloo and everything. I had a list of stuff sure as you're born. I think I had close to $3,000 worth of stuff just starting off, trying to go light. The principal gave that list back and said, "Cut it down to $250." So I had to go cut it down. But every year I'd keep on ordering, till I built up a pretty good thing. Every year I'd add analytical balances and scales and microscopes and magnets and those little things that measured electricity, all that kind of stuff, chemicals, acids, bases, sodium, all those different things, and magnesium, rhenium, all that stuff we needed.

We didn't have a hood, though. In later years I asked for a hood, so the man came out, the salesman for the company, the superintendent sent him out there to see me. See, I went in to start teaching school the first year the superintendent come into office. Mr. Martin [phonetic] was the superintendent. He sent him out there to see me, see what I needed, and I told him I needed a hood. But the kind of hood he had was a portable thing. See, you had a hood here, and then at the top you had a plastic thing with a wire inside it, you know, hold it open, like a plastic thing like you have on these dryers, and said, "Stick that out the window, carry your gas fumes out of the window." But if the wind was blowing in your window, it would blow right back up in the classroom. I told him I didn't want that, and I didn't get it. I said, "I'll wait till we can get
one." So finally, a year or so I got a hood. They went on up through the roof with it, where you have a thing to take those fumes up. You don't put no fumes out no window. The wind might be blowing right back in the classroom, see. So I finally got that.

When they passed the school, when the sent the blacks to Benton--that's where the white high school was--they sent us up there, so I didn't carry nothing away from Linwood up there. I just went up there and taught the requisite and stuff. Then my sight went bad and I had to quit. I was going to Old Miss to get my master of science degree. I had been admitted and all that for that summer, but my eyes went bad and I had to quit. I had to go to Memphis to see the eye doctor, and he told me--he used that laser beam in the eye. He told me this treatment would do me more harm than good, and I needed him to sign any papers and things. So I retired behind that.

**Dixon:** What year was that?

**Young:** That was in '71. That was in '71. I taught about close to twenty years, and then I've been retired since '71, so that's another twenty years. I had to cut it loose. I don't see out of but one eye now. I close that eye, I can't see, either. And it's foggy in this eye. My eye just runs water in the morning.

**Dixon:** Now, you spent most of those twenty years in a black
high school?

**Young:** Yeah. Before I quit, when they sent me to the white--see, when they sent us, the high school teachers, to the white high school, all the white kids went to private school, and most of the teachers left and went to private school. But a few white teachers stayed. I think a math teacher, the principal's secretary, about three or four white ladies stayed there, and the rest was black that came from our school up there. That principal, now he's the superintendent of the county schools. He's unopposed in this election.

**Dixon:** Where did you get your interest in science? How did you develop your interest in science?

**Young:** How did I get interested in science?

**Dixon:** Was there someone when you were coming up who encouraged you?

**Young:** No. You know what, I didn't like history and English because you had to write papers and stuff. I never cared much for a whole lot of writing, putting words together. In science, you go right to the point. In math, you work it out and get an answer. In science, you had a direct thing going. You didn't have to write out a whole lot of hoopla. I never was much for
that. So I kind of stayed with the sciences.

Then I was caught myself taking a pre-med course to go to medical school, and that's what I did take. But I didn't get into medical school. My grades wasn't good enough in chemistry and all those things to get in. They told me I could apply later, but I just didn't have the time to wait. I came on out and went to teaching school, you know, over the years.

You learn more teaching than you do in school. A lot of things you learn in chemistry and stuff, you learn that teaching that you didn't know because you have to study your lesson and prepare for the kids and make you learn. So I learned a lot. I've forgotten a whole lot of stuff. I took three years of French. I could have taught French when I came out of school. But if you don't use it, you lose it. I can speak a little now, but I could hardly write nothing now. I've forgotten, you know.

I could do 40 words a minute typing on the typewriter without a mistake. Now I forgot the keyboard, I've been away from it so long.

I used to play a little music. It's gone. If you don't follow that, you lose it. I used to play the Pledge of Allegiance over at St. Francis with the saxophone. They'd line up outdoors, and I'd get up on the porch and they'd sing, "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America."

I'd play that on the saxophone while they'd sing it. I took piano lessons. But when the kids playing outdoors, playing basketball and stuff like that, and you're in there practicing
music, your mind is outdoors, and the piano and you inside, that
don't work. So I didn't end up with no kind of music. We had a
little gig band. We played at little house parties and stuff
like that. We'd gig. I played clarinet. I went from sax to
clarinet because it was a little light to carry. We played
little gigs, little socials and parties and stuff like that.
Boogie was the thing in my day. That's when boogie-woogie was
in its prime. Now they got Funky Chicken and the bump and all
them different things they got going now. They're about to get
past. I don't know what the latest thing is, but that was a few
years back. So I just ended up doing nothing, like I'm doing
now.

Dixon: One more question. When you think about the town of
Yazoo, Yazoo City, and think about some of the people who were a
[unclear], either to your life or to other black people, who do
you think should be remembered?

Young: I used to work for a family, the Cranes [phonetic], in
this town. She was an old lady. She was nice. Her son, he's
the one who wrote and got me into Tougaloo, you know, sent my
letter and all that stuff in and got me. He was partially
responsible for me going to Tougaloo.

See, Tougaloo was the best black school in the state for
blacks at that time. Millsaps was the best school--it still
is--the best school for whites. Of course, blacks go there. My
daughter went there. My daughter was in Memphis. She graduated from Millsaps. She went to Memphis State, my granddaughter. I said daughter, but my granddaughter. But we raised her from a baby. She finished at Millsaps.

During that time, Dr. Berenski [phonetic], he was Polish, he was over the social science lab at Tougaloo. He taught German at Tougaloo. I took a semester of German, but I didn't like it. I went back to the romance language, French, you know, so I didn't take but a semester of German. He taught German at Tougaloo, but he taught Russian over at Millsaps. He was into education. He had all kind of degrees, international degrees, doctor degrees, and all that kind of stuff, little short fellow. He died and they buried him over there at Tougaloo, I think, Dr. Berenski.

Then we had a teacher from Millsaps came out there. She was a lawyer. She taught some kind of government course at Tougaloo. So Tougaloo and Millsaps have been pretty close together, you know what I mean.

Then we had white teachers out there that had children. They went to school in town. They couldn't go to Tougaloo. There was one white person that went through Tougaloo. See, Tougaloo used to be supported by tax funds, like public schools, back in the old days. But one white graduated at Tougaloo and they found out about it, so they cut all that support away from Tougaloo and the church had to support the school. They didn't get no more public support behind that. That was in that
history of Tougaloo they put out here a while back. I read that. I don't still have that now. It was a publication that they had all that stuff in. One white student graduated from Tougaloo during that time. That's why they lost that funding from the state.

See, they got a mansion at Tougaloo, great big mansion. That's where the slave owner stayed. They claimed that the white slave owners were sending their black children to Tougaloo and the white children went to Millsaps. That's what they say, so I don't know. But that seems reasonable, according to the way things were. So those are the two best schools in the state, really. Millsaps is just a four-year college. It's not a university. They don't offer no whole lot of different programs there. But they're recognized all over the South, North, and over in foreign countries. Millsaps got a high rating. Most all of the professors are Harvard people. That's the reason I sent my daughter. I told her to go there, where she can go to a good school.

Tougaloo was good when I went there, but over the years it looks like it has gone down. It's not quite like it used to be when I was going there. Tuition and board was $27 a month when I went to Tougaloo. Room and board was $27, and tuition was about $150, no more than that. So things were cheap, because there wasn't much money. I didn't have that, so I worked my way through school. That's how that was.
Dixon: You worked on the campus?

Young: Yeah.

Dixon: Like painting buildings?

Young: Yeah. I painted the church, I painted classrooms. I hung a little paper off the campus for folks in their house, hung a little wallpaper. I did a lot of different things, built cabinet things to hang maps on, map cabinets for the history teachers and things to hang on the wall and all that stuff. See, they had a shop there. They had high school there at Tougaloo, too, and they had Mr. Jones from down south Mississippi. He was the shop man there at the school.

And the same chemistry book that we were using in college, they were using in the high school. Mr. Carwell [phonetic], he used to teach over here. He had asthma real bad. Sometimes he had to go outside, and he had some powder he'd burn and smell that smoke to clear up his head. I don't know what it was he was burning, but he had to do that. He was tough. He taught in the college in the summertime and he taught in the high school in the winter. He was teaching kids the same thing in the high school that they were teaching us in college. So they finally stopped him from doing that.

You didn't get no eraser on your pencil, and you didn't tell him, "I don't know." That's like going and spitting in his
"So and so and so."

"I don't know."

Oh, Lord. You had to get up and get out of his class. He was tough. You had to get out of his class. You had to see the dean before you could get back in there. Sometimes the old ladies going to summer school teaching school, sometimes some of them would be sitting up there crying and going on. He was tough.

He made you do that microscopic drawing, like you look in the microscope and he put a drop of that plain water or something under that microscope and you see them amoebas and things swimming around in it, you had to draw them. They was all steady changing shapes and things, but you had to draw them. If you started to write your name on that paper and take your pen up and start back, he could tell it. You took that back and did that over. You didn't give it him. And you best not put a piece of art gum eraser on that paper. Like you're drawing something and do that. He'd hold that paper up to the light and look through there and see where that paper, stuff been kind of smeared up. No. You learned that right away, so you didn't do that no more.

But now, I'll tell you what he was. If you stayed in his class, you passed. You couldn't flunk and stay in there, because every day he gave you a test, every day. The first time you go in that class, he'd teach you within fifteen minutes of
that hour. Then he'd give you a test on what he told you that day. The next day, he'd teach and he'd give you a test. You had a test every day you went in there, and at the end, you'd have a test on all that stuff, different stuff that he had on them tests all the way up.

So all you had to do was study your notes, and when he called on you, you had to give him an answer. You had to get out of there if you said you didn't know, "I don't know." Lord have mercy. That was like walking up and spitting in his face, "I don't know." You didn't tell him that, and you got his lesson, because if you didn't get put out of there, you got his lesson. If you stayed in that class and didn't get put out, you passed. There wasn't no flunking, because you did what you had to do to stay in there. You went home and studied your notes every day, every night after you went to class, so you'd know all that stuff.

Everything he told you, he wrote on the board, and you had to copy it in your notebook when he did that. If you sit up there and look and ain't writing nothing, you had to go. Everything he said, he wrote it down. He didn't just talk, stand up there and lecture. He talked and put it on the board. You copied it off. Now, if you didn't study your notes that night and he called on you the next day, you had to get out of there. You had to go see the dean before you could get back. So he didn't play.

But the kids got a lesson, sure did. He was tough. But
the kids learned something under him. The kids that came out of
that high school into college, they didn't have no problem with
chemistry, because they were taking college chemistry while they
were in his class. Yes, sir. See, I hadn't had no chemistry
when I went to college. I hadn't had chemistry in high school.

They didn't have chemistry up at St. Francis when I was going
to school there. That was a foreign word to me. The only D on
my transcript, I made a D in general chemistry. That was the
first semester. I made a C the second semester. But I learned
more chemistry when I was teaching in the high school than I
learned in college. I took qualitative and quantitative
analysis. I took one semester organic chemistry. I had a minor
in chemistry, math, and all that. Semester hours is what we
used there at Tougaloo, semester hours.

Homemaking, we had to have a course in that. Freshmen had
to have a course in homemaking. You had to plan--Miss Gardner,
she was the home ec teacher. You had to plan a meal, shop for
the material, and cook the meal and then sit down and eat it,
according to what's this woman's name over etiquette?

Dixon: Emily Post, Elizabeth Baldridge, Vanderbilt.

Young: No. One of them old ones before that time. It was one
of them. You know what I'm talking about, dining ethics. You
had to do all that, the meal and all that kind of stuff. So we
had a kind of well-rounded education in different things like
that.

I learned a lot of stuff working with the carpenter on the campus. We'd go to the shop. They'd go over to the shop, and then he'd go out from the shop. We did plumbing, dug ditches to run pipe lines and all that stuff in the summertime, put up the cyclone fence around the football field, dug the holes, put those posts in, stretched the wire. We did all that kind of stuff. Then in the eveningtime, my boss in the hunting season he'd let me keep his double-barrel shotgun in my closet at school. I'd go down the hill and kill a couple of rabbits and then go down to home ec, down the chemistry lab and skin them and wash them and take them over to the home ec teacher's house that night and she'd fry them. We'd have fried rabbit over there and that kind of stuff.

I had a pretty good time at school, to tell you the truth. But I had to work, because I didn't have the money. My brother ran a dry cleaning plant in Jackson, so he'd come out. I'd pick up clothes from the teachers and the students for him. Cleaning of a dress was 77 cents, and he'd give me half I made, so he'd give me half of that. He'd take them in and clean them and bring them back to me, and then I'd carry them out and collect. Then I'd pay him, and then I'd have half of it was mine. So I got a little extra money that way.

I joined the fraternity. I didn't have money to get in that. I was a pretty good student, and they raised the money to put me in. I went into Alpha Phi Omega. That was the
fraternity I went to. They had all the different fraternities there, the Sigmas. What was the main one there, where they dogged you pretty good?

**Dixon:** Omega Xi Phi?

**Young:** Yeah, Omega, Omega Xi Phi and all that kind of stuff. They'd paddle them boys at night and things like that. They didn't do no whooping on us. Your shoes had to look like the sun when you went out of there in the morning. And then they'd send you to take the sweetheart, fraternity sweetheart, like to dinner or something like that. You had to be sharp. You had to wear a tuxedo during Hell Week. You had to have a tuxedo on. Every day when you'd go to dinner at night, you had to have a tuxedo and your shoes had to look like the sun.

**Dixon:** How long was the process?

**Young:** That was a week. Hell Week was a week.

**Dixon:** The whole time you were pledging, how long did that take?

**Young:** You know, you had to go to classes and learn. You had to buy a book. They had a book with it all in there. And you had to make your walking cane and your paddle and all that
stuff. You'd make that over at the shop and paint it up black and gold and all that kind of stuff.

But see, they raised the money to buy my book and all that stuff. I didn't have no money, because I was just working my way through school. They didn't fool with nobody unless they had a pretty good—you had to at least have a B average to get in there. But that's how I got in.

Most all my classmates were doctors, a lot of them, doctors. Matthew Page [phonetic] up there at Greenville, I think he was in my class. Hubert Wallace up there at Louise, Douglas Pass [phonetic] from Hattiesburg. This fellow over here at Lexington, he wasn't in my class, Dr. Beard [phonetic], but he was going there at the time I was going. And Joseph Jones of Canton. He went a little cuckoo. He went up to Clarksdale, and his wife quit him and took the house and all that stuff, and he went cuckoo. I don't know where he is now. He went back to Canton, but whether he's still living or not, I don't know. So I say I might be glad I didn't get into the medical profession, for going cuckoo. Two of them down at Hattiesburg, they had a clinic down there. They just got up one morning and left Hattiesburg and went on to Chicago, left the clinic they had going down there in Hattiesburg and just went on off.

**Dixon:** Do you know why?

**Young:** I don't know. That's cuckoo. I don't know. I'm glad I
didn't get into that, because, you know, I might have been crazy, too. So I don't know. I didn't make it, so I didn't get a chance to experience that. I didn't get in. I got my rejection letter now from Howard [unclear], Howard in Washington, Howard University.

[End of Interview]