

Transcript of a Recorded Interview with Dossie Acklin, 21 Mar 1992

AB: This is Dossie Acklin, a black man, 81 years old, my step-grandfather. Okay, what is your full name?

DA: Dossie Curr Acklin. Don't you put that Curr.

AB: Okay.

DA: So, that Curr I never saw it on nothing, since I've been a grown man.

AB: Really?

DA: With Dossie Acklin, I got all of my papers. None of it's on there. Everything is with Dossie.

AB: Dossie? Okay.

DA: Now, you got to have this family. Now, the first thing you need is my daddy and mother, right?

AB: Well, what year were you born? What was your birth date?

DA: It's December the 19th, 1910.

AB: Nineteen ten.

DA: Yes.

AB: Born where?

DA: Alabama. Madison, let's see . . . Alabama.

AB: What part of Alabama?

DA: Pico. Pico, Alabama.

AB: Hmm.

DA: Madison County. Madison County.

AB: Okay. How . . . How many, brothers and sisters?

DA: I have. . . Let's see. Three brothers, two sisters. There is one living. There is one sister died. She's the first child my mother had was a girl.

AB: Hmm.

DA: She was ... none of us ever did see her. None of us other kids. She died when she was a baby.

AB: Ahhh.

DA: Her name, I think, was Tracy May.

AB: She would've been the oldest?

DA: She would've been the oldest one.

AB: Okay. Where do you come in? Are you the...

DA: I'm next. I'm next.

AB: Okay.

DA: I'm the oldest one that was living. Let's see, my first brother died. I need to have Georgia here with me. Georgia knows all this _____died I believe in '82.

AB: Really?

DA: Yeah. And the next one died. _____about '35, that was a baby brother.

AB: Oh.

DA: Now, this one here Jimmy what died in Cincinnati in '82.

AB: Okay.

DA: And Paul, he died in Louisville in '85.

AB: Okay. So, what were their names? All your brothers and sisters.

DA: Now, what you want? You want to start with me and come down?

AB: Right. Right.

DA: Okay. Now, let's see. Jimmy's next to me. Jimmy Acklin.

AB: Right.

DA: And next is Gertrude Taylor. She was an Acklin, but she married a Taylor.

AB: Oh, okay.

DA: And ___Edna, that's my sister. Then, Harvey Lee Acklin, that's the one lives in Cincinnati. And then Maura Preston live in Detroit and then Arthur Acklin is the one that lives here.

AB: Oh, okay.

DA: That's the baby.

AB: Okay. So, living right now is who?

DA: Me, and Harvey Lee, Gertrude Taylor lives in Huntsville, Alabama, and Maura Preston is in Detroit. Two girls and two boys.

AB: Oh, okay.

DA: And, let's see . . . Yeah, two girls and two boys, and two boys and two boys killed.

AB: Mother's Day?

DA: I said I'll tell your mother _____.

AB: Oh, okay. What were their names?

DA: My mother?

AB: Hmm-Mmm.

DA: Ethel. Same as your grandmother's name.

AB: Yeah. Okay. Ethel.

DA: Your great-grandmother.

AB: Hmm-Mmm.

DA: Yes, her name was Ethel. _____, you know.

AB: Oh, okay. What was your mother's maiden name?

DA: Her maiden name?

AB: Hmm-Mmm.

DA: Woods. Ethel Woods.

AB: Okay. What was your father's name?

DA: Robert Acklin.

AB: Robert Acklin.

DA: Yeah.

AB: Where were they born?

DA: Let me see, they were all born in Alabama.

AB: Oh, okay. Okay.

DA: That's as close as I can give you.

AB: Do you know what their birth date was? Their birthdays?

DA: I know my mother's birthday was May 1, but now I don't know what year. And my daddy, let me see, I think my daddy's birthday . . . I really don't know for sure.

AB: Okay.

DA: That's _____.

AB: That's alright.

DA: But, I know my mother's was May the 1 because we always sent her something.

AB: That's sweet. Do you remember the name of the schools you attended?

DA: Where I attended?

AB: Or the first grade?

DA: Well, it was a country school. The first school I attended in Berkly Alabama. Let me see, I was in the first in a little primer

AB: Okay. Go ahead.

DA: And I think we called it Red Hawk School. That was the first one. The next one was in Pico. They were two schools that I can remember. Now, I didn't keep no _____. I didn't go.

AB: Did you finish high school?

DA: I think so. Yeah.

AB: So, you graduated from Pico?

DA: From Pico School, yes.

AB: Okay. What kind of work did you?

DA: When I got to be a man or . . . ?

AB: Just throughout, during that time.

DA: Well, I'll tell you, I done construction work. I was a truck driver four and a half years on the road. And then I worked on a farm. I worked at a milk dairy.

AB: During the 30's, you lived in Alabama, right?

DA: That's right.

AB: Okay. What do you remember most about that period in the 30's?

DA: What do I what?

AB: What do you remember most about that period? Around that time?

DA: What I remember the most?

AB: Uh-huh. What do you remember most about that time?

DA: Well, I was down in Alabama all the thirties and I was in farm work the most.

AB: Okay. Anything that you remember that really stands out that happened though?

DA: What happened?

AB: I mean, anything, during that time do you remember during the 30's, you know, that just stood out?

DA: Let me see now. No nothing but the hard times, the Depression.

AB: Hmm-Mmm. Now, what about it?

DA: Well, what about the Depression? Okay, the price of all kinds of food went down real cheap. Clothes went cheap. Ice went cheap. Gas, everything. Well, during the 30s, the depression hit everything. Even gasoline was 13 cents a gallon.

AB: Hmm.

DA: Yeah.

AB: That was before the Depression?

DA: That was in the Depression. Before it was a little bit more, about 20 cents or 25. But in the Depression things went down. What caused them to go down, couldn't nobody buy it. _____ That's where people used to sit out here for 40 or 50 cents a _____, it went to 6 cents. A nickel and one penny, a _____.

AB: Really?

DA: Uh, a corn _____. Many corn folks used to have to shell the corn and fall had a corn shelling. Shell the corn and sell the corn in the crate for _____. Always about 40 or 50 cents a bushel.

AB: Hmm.

DA: And all the children now went to farmers _____ potatoes, a bushel of potatoes was 40 cents, for a bushel.

AB: Really? What made it go down like that?

DA: Depression hard. Well, let's see . . . this stuff started back in Hoover's time and worsened. Now, the first thing started public work went bad.

AB: What went bad?

DA: Work like your mother worked. And your daddy worked. Them kind of jobs. They got to laying people off. Laid off. Some of them laid off two-thirds. Some places closed. See, that put a lot of people in the street. Well, what caused this, people out in the street, didn't have no job, didn't have no money. They couldn't buy nothing. Don't care what you have to sell, there was a lot of honest people that wouldn't have a dollar. If they would brought it all together, they wouldn't have but three dollars.

AB: Really? Hmm.

DA: Yeah. It was hard times. It was terrible tough. Well, I can go on and tell you a whole lot of things, even down to clothes. Just like this sweater you got here, which you could buy this sweater for 49 or 59 cents. But where you going to get that? You didn't have a choice. You couldn't make nothing. A girl like you couldn't find a job. No work. At home or whatever it was. Well, out in the country farmers, they raised all kinds of vegetables. They raised their own hogs. They killed their own hogs. They had their own milk cows. They raised _____. So, few clothes. A lot of farmers didn't even have a suit. Couldn't get it.

AB: How was it before the Depression? Right before the Depression?

DA: Well, this continued before the Depression. Well, I'll tell you, this _____ this white guy, he would get some money to buy it, but _____ if somebody wanted to sell you and says you didn't pay him for a dollar you couldn't get your dollar. You couldn't buy and you know that _____, but you still couldn't buy it. The Depression, now we had some tough times here, back in the Reagan administration. It got sort of tight.

AB: What administration?

DA: In Reagan. But that was a recession, and things just got sort of cheap, but depression is worse than the recession. Here's something else. When you find out, I'll tell you what, your daddy could leave here this month, be gone a week, and not make a dollar. Not a dollar. You're all making _____ and there wasn't such a thing as food stamps. No, there wasn't none of that.

AB: How did you all make it?

DA: Well, we didn't need no stamps. See, a stamp now won't buy nothing but food.

AB: Right.

DA: We had food. Now, we had an uncle lived in Huntsville. He used to come out to our house. We had a garden oh, maybe _____. Anyhow, our garden was twice as big as beyond that fence. Twice as long. And we raised all kinds of beans, tomatoes, okra, cabbage. We raised them and out in a field and we raised potatoes, sweet potatoes and mashed potatoes, we called them back in them days. We'd raise, oh, loads of them. Well, if you were in a family and you lived in town, and you'd come out and get you a sack full. We'd give it to you. We'd be glad to. I'm not joking. Now, are you ready? On this farm, we lived. We share cropped. That big land owner, he got half of what we raised on that farm, all except he'd give you your garden. He'd give you all of that. And, for going out to some kind of recreation . . .

AB: Yeah, entertainment.

DA: We would try, maybe on the weekends, not every weekend. But some weekend, we had what you'd call a little country supper. That's what they called it. You'd go to somebody's house that had one. They would have ice cream, bologna and hamburgers. They would sell them to the people. And we would have a little music, guitar playing, and dancing. And it would last some time until about 1-2 o'clock. Then, you'd go home and go to bed.

AB: So, that's what you'd do. Did you go to the movies or did you go with someone?

DA: Well, the country people there maybe go to the movies three or four times a year. Not every weekend, maybe three or four times a year. When I was 17 or 18 years old, the first movie I went to.

AB: Really?

DA: That's right.

AB: Was that in the 30s?

DA: That was back in the Depression.

AB: During the Depression? Hmm. Well, how did you sacrifice or save money to go to the show? How did you save your money, you know, to go to the show or to go to the movies?

DA: How would I save? Well, my daddy would give us a little money. It wouldn't cost you but about 25 cents to get in the show.

AB: Oh, okay.

DA: And he'd give us maybe 75 cents to go to the show?

AB: Did you all have to sacrifice anything? You know, maybe cut down on some things for the Depression?

DA: No, we would get this little extra money maybe twice a month. Not every weekend. Maybe twice. And the thing is, in the country, it was pretty poor. People didn't come home, but they didn't keep no money. There wasn't no jobs and nobody had no money. That was the way it was. The city was pretty bad the same way. Only the city was worse. See, you had to buy your food. What you going to buy it with? You didn't have no money.

AB: Hmm. Yeah. So, you all were a little bit better.

DA: People was in soup line. I can remember that. Of course, I never was in a soup line, but I have seen people in them. The soup line would be a half a block long. And everyday. Yeah. Now, I's aiming to tell you, when the ___ was so ____, and then you could buy a new Ford car for like 7 or 800 dollars, brand new. But, where are you going to get that. The big man's the only fellow could buy any kind of car. We bought a car. I can remember my daddy, he had one, and we couldn't even afford new tires. If it would blow a tire, we would have to put on _____ to go ahead and pump it.

AB: Put what in it?

DA: What they call a _____. That was a thing you can put on this tire over here. If a hole was blown in your tire, you put that on the hole to go ahead on and put air. Then, there come a time they have what they call an inner tube. That was a tube inside of the tire that held air. They don't have that now.

AB: What do you remember about Franklin Roosevelt?

DA: What I know about him?

AB: Hmm-Mmm.

DA: Well, Franklin D. Roosevelt, what I know about him, is . . . When he was elected president, he come in and bring things up. He'd get jobs started then and farms were tough to keep raised on the farm for the market. He said he had a set price on that where you could get a little money out of it. You'd know what you was doing. Before he was elected president, everything was just dead. If you had something to sell, you couldn't find nobody to buy it.

AB: So, you felt like he helped?

DA: Well, I'll tell you what he done too. When he got to be president, he made what they call... let's see, that was a government note to the farmer. That was to the farmers, a loan. He made a loan to the farmers that we could pool our money to get started out again. Right.

AB: Oh.

DA: Yeah. That was how hard times was then.

AB: Hmm. How long did you all have to pay for them?

DA: Well, that stayed about . . . That started in '29, '30, '31, '32. He come _____ about '33.

AB: Hmm.

DA: Yeah. _____. We had about four years of that kind of stuff. And country people going to them supper things, and enjoyed themselves, just like people do now. Going out to repeat things.

AB: Wow.

DA: Yeah. That's like you would be going to the fair some day, enjoying it and there will be people for 8 or 10 miles getting into those things.

AB: Hmm.

DA: Yeah. They have a quarter or 50 cents to spend, but then, you could buy a big hamburger for, let's see, a dime, 10 cents. Two for 15 cents. Two hamburgers. Well, a whole lots of things that you could buy real cheap and house rent in the city, I would say between 10 to 25 dollars a month. Of course, that was a cheap house. That wouldn't nothing like this. No. They'd share it and probably cost you \$40 or \$50, and then couldn't nobody live in it, but the so called shots. This house, brand new, would cost maybe \$4,000 or \$5,000, but it cost you \$100,000 now.

AB: What . . . What . . . how was your house built? What was it like? How many rooms?

DA: We had four or five rooms. Probably five. See, we was tenants on a farm. And we lived in the white man's house. It was a big farm. A big landowner. Some landowners owned 2,000 and 3,000 acres of land, but we did all the _____.

AB: Really?

DA: That's right.

AB: So, your whole family lived with another family?

DA: Our family?

AB: Yes. You all lived in a house with some other family?

DA: Well, each family lived in the same house, but different houses.

AB: Oh, okay.

DA: Each family. See, I lived . . . We lived in a house and you all lived in another house. You all might be living three miles from us. The houses in the country then, here we had water _____ away from you. That was close. And a well apart. All kinds of farm land in between there. You'd walk out of your house and look out at those fields. Back in them days, I remember when it wasn't no black top roads.

AB: Wasn't blacktop?

DA: I mean, wasn't a smooth highway like it is now. It was what they called a gravel highway road.

AB: Okay, who all lived in your house in the '30s?

DA: I mean, surely, you don't want the names?

AB: Well, not necessarily, but just who all lived in your house?

DA: In my house, where I lived?

AB: Right.

DA: Nobody but me and my wife and my four children in my house.

AB: Okay. Okay.

DA: Now, nobody'd live with you unless there's so many people or something. That is, your mother or your daddy or some other person was living. Say your daddy or mother, one of them

died, then, well, that one could live in the house with you. Two of my children was born in the Depression. That was the two oldest, James and Janine.

AB: Okay. Did that make it harder to provide for them since they were born in the Depression?

DA: No. It didn't bother us too bad. See, I didn't have to have much money because, really, we raised everything but clothes. Like, everything in my kitchen, I raised except coffee, sugar, and flour. I could raise . . . I even raised my own mill. We raised corn and had a mill that would grind this corn into meal for cornbread. I had my own cow, my own milk. I didn't have to buy no milk. No butter. No meat. No lard.

AB: Is that right?

DA: Yes.

AB: What about your kids in the '30s? How did they . . . Well, they probably wouldn't . . . During the Depression, for entertainment, did they . . . ?

DA: What, the children?

AB: What did they do for entertainment?

DA: Well, the children, now the most of the entertainment that they had after I left and came here to Kentucky, they then got large enough to go out by themselves.

AB: Okay. During the Depression, did you have electricity in the house?

DA: Huh?

AB: Did you have electricity in the house during the Depression?

DA: No. No. No telephone. No electricity. No ____ had a telephone.

AB: Did you have a radio either?

DA: No. Nobody had, uh, the heat. No gas heat. All the heat was from wood. The stove. The cooking stove required wood.

AB: Did you have radio?

DA: Let me see . . . Yeah, I had a radio, but now, it didn't take electric, that was way back. That was when radio had a battery. Battery sat in the back of it. The battery was as long as this here. _____ sat back in that radio. Let me see, the first radio I owned was a Philco. Yeah, I know that. And it talked good. I could pick up . . . I could pick up overseas with that thing.

AB: So, that was kind of your entertainment, too, to listen to the radio for music?

DA: Yeah.

AB: Do you remember your favorite song around that time? Any particular song that you remember?

DA: No. Let me see . . . No, I can't remember the first song.

AB: Well, it doesn't have to be the first song. I didn't know if you remembered any songs?

DA: Well, you see, now that's been a long time ago. There's a whole lot of things that went out of my mind.

AB: Did you all have an automobile in 1935? Did you all have a car in 1935?

DA: Yeah.

AB: You did? What kind?

DA: An Oldsmobile.

AB: Really?

DA: Let me see, it was a 1923.

AB: Well, now, what did you work in the Depression, during the Depression?

DA: Huh?

AB: You worked . . . You got paid for share cropping?

DA: I worked during the Depression, and I took work on the farm during the summer season and then in the winter time, I would pick up a job wherever I could.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 1.

BEGINNING OF TAPE 1, SIDE 2.

DA: You know what, if a man went out and made \$6 a week. A week. A week, not a day now. That ain't what I said. He called himself doing good. He called himself . . . That was how high pay during that Depression was.

AB: Were you doing that good?

DA: Huh?

AB: Were you doing pretty good?

DA: I was doing alright. I lived.

AB: With four kids, I guess?

DA: Well, I'll tell you what, well, my wife, she wasn't working. I was the only one at the house that could work. And, I had them two kids.

AB: You had two at the time? Okay.

DA: Yeah. And whenever I went home, I could keep them eating, keep them with clothes. We'd go to church every Sunday.

AB: Really?

DA: We didn't have the finest clothes but we was decent. We was along with the rest of the people.

AB: Is that right?

DA: Yeah. But, it really took a man to study. What I mean, he had to put every effort into his hours.

AB: What do you mean put every effort?

DA: Well, the thing of it is, you couldn't go out and blow it. The chance you had that \$5 or \$6 dollars, you couldn't go out and blow it or spend it. _____. You couldn't do it.

AB: How did you spend yours?

DA: Huh?

AB: How did you spend your money?

DA: How did I spend it?

AB: How did you spend it?

DA: Well, Ma would want it if we needed some flour, sugar, coffee, and that's about it. Well, that would take \$2 or \$3 to get enough of that to take care of us for a whole week. The rest of it, I spent it for whatever was needed. And this car, the gasoline would take 8 cents a gallon.

AB: Hmm. Do you blame President Hoover for the Great Depression?

DA: Huh?

AB: Do you blame President Hoover for the Great Depression? Do you blame him for the Depression?

DA: Yes, I do. That's where it started.

AB: Really?

DA: During his administration. That's where it started. And he stayed right there and we got out of his Depression when President Roosevelt went in. He was there for a while in his administration because he had to have time to try to get things straightened out. Depression is something else.

AB: Hmm. Uh, do you blame Wall Street? The Wall Street stock?

DA: Do I blame Wall Street?

AB: F the Depression?

DA: Well, I don't know what. I didn't know much about Wall Street in them days. But he had a better plan. I don't know why this Depression got started. There's a start for everything. But, I don't know why, 'cause I was a young man then, and it just slipped up on me. Anyway, this sure is a great time for what it was then.

AB: Oh, can I ask you something? Well, remember we were talking about the WPA? The CCC. Which one of those do you think had an immediate, uh, contact, I guess?

DA: Well, the WPA, that was a big thing. Now, you know what state and county paid. Men worked on that job. The WPA was something like, let me see . . . WPA was just so nice. The street work. You see all this street work going over here in town. The WPA done all of that. You just get on the WPA and work on that street. Okay, they'd pay you a little money. And the CCC, that was something like the Army. There was a CCC that you could join here and you belonged with Uncle Sam then. You would take Army training in the CC Camp.

AB: Did you all have immediate contact with CCC?

DA: No.

AB: Just WPA?

DA: Just WPA, was what the average man. CC, that was young men that wanted to take training for the Army. Like you would take . . . You had to be 18 before you could get in. And then 18 to, oh, 25 or something like that was the age limit in Roosevelt's time. That didn't come in Hoover's. Hoover didn't have nothing. Roosevelt gave us WPA. That's the object probably of

the administration, I think is to be rich or poor. Worked for his administration. Now you could... When Roosevelt got in, old men that didn't have jobs could get on that WPA. That WPA was a regular job.

AB: So, you think that President Roosevelt helped in the Depression? He helped people in the Depression?

DA: Roosevelt?

AB: Hmm-Mmm.

DA: Oh, yeah.

AB: Did he help end the Depression?

DA: He was the greatest man. Yeah, he helped . . . He ended the Depression. He was the greatest man in that Depression.

AB: Okay. Did you and your family lose any property during the Depression at all?

DA: No. We just had a little bit.

AB: I know I know. (Laughter)

DA: See, I'm telling you the truth, the black man too under pressure. Not only the black man, not only the poor man, but here was some . . . I guess, I always said middle class people lost their property, a lot of them lost their property. But when Roosevelt got in, them that was deep in debt and threatening to lose it, he made some kind of a loan that they could borrow money and get back and could pay off this note that was just about to foreclose on them. See the different banks that let you borrow money. Say they owned this house, they let you borrow money on this house until they got you so good to where you couldn't pay it. When you couldn't pay your payment, then they'd foreclose you and this house goes to them.

AB: Oh, my goodness.

DA: They took a lot of people's property.

AB: Hmm. Okay. Um, during the 1930's, what was your preferred political party? Were you a Democrat, Republican or Independent?

DA: In the 1930's, we were Republicans.

AB: You were a preferred Republican?

DA: Let's see, I believe it was '33 or '34 when the Democrats got in. That was Roosevelt. He

was a Democrat.

AB: Hmm-Mmm. And then, did you switch? Did you go from Republican to Democrat?

DA: I didn't go for neither one of them. I couldn't vote.

AB: Oh, that's what I was asking. Okay.

DA: No, we, the black man in the south wasn't allowed to vote.

AB: That's terrible. Okay. What were you more concerned with during that time? Uh, like domestic problems or international problems?

DA: Well, international problems, that's the whole thing, right?

AB: Right, uh-huh. Domestic is just right at home.

DA: I would say that was international problem.

AB: You were more concerned with that? Or were you more concerned with domestic? Were you more concerned with, you know, the country or were you concerned with the whole world, worldwide?

DA: Was I?

AB: You, uh-huh.

DA: No, I wasn't concerned with the whole world, but I know now that where I was in the United States, I ain't going to say the whole world. But, I know that the United States was in bad shape then. The whole United States. Any place that you could read about was having problems. Domestic problems are what I'm talking about. Everybody was in a tight place. Losing farms, losing their homes, automobiles. Now, if they owned them. There wasn't too many people who owned a good car. Here's what the big shot done. He buys a car and wear it out and he'd sell it to you at a good price. You'd be glad to get it being if you didn't. I mean you wouldn't pay much for it. About a year on it or something like that. So, if you bought a car that cost \$300, he may take \$50 in a year. That's about all you could pay. That was how tight it was.

AB: Do you believe that today's young people have more opportunities than you had in the 1920s?

DA: Today's young people?

AB: Today's young people.

DA: Oh, yes! I sure do. I'll tell you what, I would say nowadays that black people are 100% over what they were than in the '30s. Now, listen, you didn't hardly have a chance to get an education because we went to a little, maybe one-room school, one big room. Pa would say that this is your whole house, but it was just one room, one kitchen. And, maybe she'd have about thirty children, maybe, thirty and that'd be it. I went to school back in them days and I tell you what, I was awed at how much privilege we had. I went there till I got up big enough to work at my home before it got cold. About two months out of the year.

AB: You went to school two months?

DA: About two months out of the year. Well, I couldn't learn too much. Not all I could. Now, you take me, I tell you where I work at now. I'm a supervisor in the welding shop. Also, I can read all kinds of blueprints. I can set up anybody's job. I'd got a paper. Now don't cancel it. I got a paper. That I can set up in a frame sometime and let you look at it. And I'm going to tell you something. I finished the 6th grade.

AB: You finished the 6th grade?

DA: I finished the 6th grade, and we got men out there now going to college, I'd walk around them with their blueprints.

AB: You got a blueprint, okay?

DA: I'm training a boy. He's in college. I'm training him with blueprints now.

AB: Hmm. So, when you say . . .

DA: You don't know it. You can't get this chart. You can't be a set up man until you know what you're doing.

AB: Okay, so, when you say that today's young people have more opportunities, do you think they take advantage of that now or . . . ?

DA: That you all got opportunities 100% over me . . . Than when I've come up. Now, here's a lot of things. You can go to white school. We couldn't. You can get on the bus and sit down where you want to. We could get on the bus but sit on the backseat. If the backseat was all the way occupied, clean across the whole seat, those seats went all the way across the first on the back, they got them now you know and let you sit where you want to. Okay? If it was occupied, was no place to sit down, and all the rest of the seats was empty, you'd have to stand up. You couldn't sit on one of them little short seats. That was for the whites. Okay? I tell you how tough it was. Go to a restaurant. You didn't walk in a restaurant, sit down and go to eat. You walked through the back door, ordered you a sandwich and headed back out that door. You could see the inside, the front of the restaurant but you didn't never sit in it. _____, but after Roosevelt . . . He brought down a lot of places. The only restaurants that we could go in. Let's see, now . . .

AB: You said the only kind of restaurants you could go in was what kind?

DA: Well, the one that we could go in was owned by some foreigner. He come there and opened up a little old restaurant, but it wasn't nothing much. All he sold was hamburgers and cold drinks and Coke and stuff like that. He had a colored lady cooking for him. We could go in there.

AB: Okay. What has been the overall, you know long impact of programs such as social security? Did that really help you? Farm subsidies?

DA: Well, I'm going to tell you what, I don't know about social security, but I believe social security must've come in Roosevelt's time. 'Cause now, back further than that, I don't remember paying no social security, but I remember paying it in his time.

AB: Was it was a helpful program to you?

DA: See, in Roosevelt's time, I was in public work. I worked at what you called the Huntsville Arsenal. That's where they built that big missile and all of them where we built all kinds of ammunition for the army during World War II. I was there working then.

AB: Hmm. Okay.

DA: I left that fall and went for myself.

AB: Oh, you all moved?

DA: Huh?

AB: The whole family just moved when you got that job?

DA: No, I still stayed in the country.

AB: What would you say is the most valuable lesson you learned from the Great Depression?

DA: Huh?

AB: What would you say is the most valuable lesson that you learned? Did you learn a lesson of some type?

DA: The most valuable lesson I did learn I would say truck driving. See, I liked to drive tractor trailers.

AB: Well, I mean, what type of . . . as far as . . . when I said what valuable lesson, I mean, as far as, did you learn how to save money or did you learn that opportunities . . . ?

DA: Yeah, I did learn that I picked up a little on how to save a little money.

AB: Alright.

DA: But now, here, the way I saved was working two jobs. Working two jobs.

AB: Would you say during the Depression, would you say that families were closer back then? You know, it was a more closer family ties than today, compared to today? Would you say the family was a lot closer?

DA: Well, I couldn't hardly say. Then, they were close. They were close, but there were some wild families here. What I mean is that some men would leave their family and go away and maybe go 1,000 miles from his home and the woman may not never see him no more. He was disgusted with his pay. He couldn't take care of everything he wanted. He just got all worried and everything and he just went off and left them.

AB: So, would you say, compared to families of today and families back then?

DA: Well, when he leaves his family just like, say, I had a son who was to walk off and leave his wife and two or three kids, then I would move them in the house with me and try to take care of them. I could take care of them.

AB: Do you think it's like that today? That families are . . .

DA: No, no. I don't believe that people are that close. No, I'll tell you what, today, people, I would say 75% of the people are not together like they used to be. Now, what I'm getting at is this. Now, you take your grandmother. She's right together with you. You know that. But how many more do you know?

AB: That's true.

DA: Now, I've known people right in this town that don't even think about their kids. That their kids stay at home with them and they'd walk off and leave their children. There's a little baby that can't walk.

AB: What did you say now?

DA: I said men don't enjoy their family these days like they used to.

AB: Hmm.

DA: Well, you could know that because you can read. You can hear on the radio, I mean, on TV how people are doing one another.

AB: Right. Let me ask you another question. When you think about the Great Depression, do

you think of them as the good old days or do you think they were the worst days? What kind of feelings do you think about when you think about the Great Depression?

DA: I don't understand.

AB: What kind of feelings do you think about when you think about the Great Depression? What kind of feelings do you have?

DA: Well, I think about the Great Depression, friends. The kinds of friends I'm thinking about and the kind of friends . . .

AB: No, I'm sorry, I said feelings.

DA: Feelings?

AB: Yes. Uh-huh.

DA: Oh, yeah. Oh.

AB: I mean good feeling, bad feeling, sad, uh . . .

DA: Well, I'll tell you what, I just felt pretty good because we had everything but money and it really didn't help to have that. Everybody couldn't feel that way because some people wasn't in the shape of me. You got the people that was caught in the city, work closed down on them. You couldn't buy a job. There wasn't nothing. The white people that used to have cooks, they started cooking their own selves. Then, the cook didn't have a job. This man said he worked around the house taking care of the flowers in the gardens. Their garden spot. They lay him off. Everybody around here got laid off. Poor people got the first layoffs and they stayed with them layoffs for about two years.

AB: Do you think of the Great Depression as the good old days in a way?

DA: Well, here's the thing, talking about the Depression, we are talking about the hardest time in years. We are talking about a recession. There are a few things that help me _____. But the depression, if we have a depression now, it would be . . . well, it would be twice as bad as it was back in the '30s. First place, there's a whole lot more people. The next thing, there's a lot of people that never knowed what it was.

AB: Do you think another depression will come? Do you think it will come back? Do you think we'll have another depression?

DA: I think we will. According to the scriptures and according to . . . I talking about the bible. According to the bible, what have been will be your king.

AB: Hmm.

DA: Jesus Christ.

AB: Alright.

DA: He was here once. He's coming back.

AB: Hmm.

DA: This world, not the whole world. This new country. It's not an old country that was destroyed. They were in a flood, but this country will be destroyed again not by a flood, but a fire.

AB: So, you're thinking another depression could come again?

DA: Yeah.

AB: That concludes our interview. The interview was conducted by Alicia Booker, a psychology major for History 203, Professor Ellis for the History 203 Oral History project. The interview was conducted at the home of Alicia Booker, March 21, 1992 at 7 o'clock p.m.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 2.