

Oral History with Jennie Blackmon

Interviewee: Jennie Blackmon

Interviewer: Her Grandson who's first name is Brad.

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Interview location: Lincolnton, Lincoln County, Georgia

List of acronyms: JB= Jennie Blackmon, GSB= Grandson Brad

Transcript by James A. Todd

[Begin Transcription 00:00:05]

Grandson Brad: The following interview is an interview with Jennie Blackmon my grandmother. She is a retired worker that, works around the house and works at other people's houses taking care of them. She lives in Lincoln County Georgia, Lincolnton is the city, and this interview is done on February 18th, 1994. Alright.

Jennie Blackmon: Alright I can remember in the depression days, and long before them in the twenties. We, my first remembrance is when I went to school, my first school days. At Goshen school and it was a one-room schoolhouse. And all the children gathered in one little bench there for us to have our classes, but I was in the first grade at six years old. So, then the way we had to get to school was we had to walk, it wasn't very far from where we lived to our schoolhouse because my granddaddy gave the land to build this schoolhouse on, for this school to be built in our community. Then lots of children from all over the Goshen community, and below the town, and city there, they had to live and walk to school. They had no way, we had no way of going to school, nobody had cars. And so we would walk. And some girls, some of the girls and boys would have to walk nearly two miles to the schoolhouse. And one family in particular that rode in a "burgy". (She means buggy) [00:00:28]

GSB: Now what is a "burgey"? [00:01:56]

JB: A "burgy" was a, well that's what you pulled, a burgy called, houses pulling a burgy, a mule pulling a burgy. And this boy and girl, they were sisters and brothers, and this boy and girl would unhitch their (audible laughing by JB) mule right there in Grampa's pasture and leave him there until we got out of school. And leave this, (audible laughing by JB) That burgy was something back then, being it was all that anyone had to ride in was a burgy. It was a two-wheeled cart pulled by a mule.

GSB: Oh, okay, okay. [00:02:40]

JB: They would park their burgy in my granddaddy's yard. Put the mule there in the lot where they could get it when they come back because it was to far for them to have to walk. And then, we had no, back in those days we didn't have any money, everybody was poor, didn't anybody have any money at all. Only just what little that they could sell, some chickens or something like that, to get some food if they run out. We lived at home. We lived at home because my

granddaddy and daddy would plant wheat and corn and oats and things like that. They carried out corn to mill and had it ground up to meal to make cornbread out of. And then the flour we had, he grew out of wheat to make our flour. All these years we did that but it would run out sometimes during the year. Wheat and stuff and the corn would run out, so he would, we would have to buy our food then. We would have to buy our flour and lots of times the way we did that was my mother would set our hens out in the chicken house and raise little biddies. They would grow up and she would put them in to cook and fatten them up so we could sell them to the chicken (Inaudible word) that would come around. And we had a little extra change that way. And then whenever we needed some flour, I mean some sugar and some lard, that's how we would get it. And then my granddaddy and my daddy would get out, he finally got back in the nineteen and thirties, my daddy bought him an old T-model car. And he threshed peas, he would go around to different people's houses and thresh peas. And he could sell some peas and we would have a little change then for what we needed in the house. But now going back to the wheat, our family, there were three families that lived together in the little neighborhood of Goshen. And whenever it was time to gather the wheat, my granddaddy would let them come, and we had a big yard, a big lot down there. And he would let the three families come in and they would bring their wheat, their oats to be threshed. The thresher would come up and sit there and thresh it down in Grandpa's yard. And the people would bring in their grain to be thrashed, so we would have lots of straw in our yard at that time, but different families come by and pick up the straw. They got lots of it that way. [00:02:44]

GSB: Let me ask you this. What did your dad and mother do for a living during this time?
[00:06:21]

JB: Well, everybody was farmers back in that day. There wasn't any jobs, they were farmers. They raised their crops. They planted corn and cotton and wheat. At the beginning of the year, the fall of the year, no it was the spring of the year when they planted their crops. They would barrow, they would go to the bank, and borrow about seventy-five dollars. And that would be enough to get their seed to plant. And then to buy us a pair of shoes now, we had, my daddy had always borrowed enough for us to have shoes to wear during the winter months. When it was bad. So, we only had two pairs of shoes and that was one, Sunday's pair of shoes and one to wear to school. And I have known that my mother would give me her shoes to wear, and my shoes would wear out. And she would take my shoes for me to go to school with. In the winter months, but when it was warm and all, we went barefooted. All the neighbors, all the neighbor's children went barefooted. It was accustomed and that's what we did. And these people that lived off from school they walked barefooted. And that was how, there wasn't ever any clothes bought. Our mommas made all our clothes. Mommas in the neighborhood. We didn't buy any clothes. They were made. And when they got through planting, using the fertilizer out of the sacks, my mother would take them and put them in the pots and boil them down and try to get all the numbers out of them, and they looked kind of like linin when she got through with it. She would make us little step-ins, little panties to wear. And then we would make us some little slips out of it. And that's what we had because my momma sewed, she done all of our sewing up until way up until the forties, she sewed for me. And then she would make sheets and things out of the sacks that we had. It wasn't all that much, but my granddaddy, he got some fertilizer, and my daddy both got fertilizer, and they'd give us some extra sacks. And so when the flour would run out we would have enough money to go and buy us a sack of flour, at that time the now, the

shoes didn't cost you over a dollar and a half, that we bought. About a dollar and a half, a pair of shoes, some of them were a dollar a pair of shoes. And the material that the dresses were made out of didn't cost us anything, only just for the flour sacks they were made out of. [00:06:28]

GSB: What does your brothers do? [00:09:59]

JB: Well, my baby brother was too little to do anything back in the twenties, back in the age, I done forgot what year he was born, what year he was born in, but he was a baby, he and my sister. There were five of us. Five children in the family. And so, we had a hard time. And I know a lot and a lot of times we would say well, we had vegetables for dinner and for supper, we know what we were going to have because it would be fat back and thick gravy. We didn't have anything but that for supper, you know fat back and thick gravy unless somebody wanted some of the vegetables left over from dinner. But nobody hardly wanted them. The working people had to eat. They had to have a lot of food you know, to eat, to keep them going. So back in twenty, twenty-one, and twenty-two, my granddaddy had another house on his place, and he let this family, this colored people move in. And this old lady had two boys and they were about eighteen and nineteen years old. And they were slaves, and he took them in and gave them a place to live, for them to help work the farm. And they would grow their food too. They would have stuff to eat, but they would grow it. We had gardens. My daddy would fix the gardens, I was little then, but I remember seeing momma and daddy picked beans and things and can them. And the butter beans we would dry um, pick the dry butter beans and we would let them dry, and lay them out so we could have some of those to eat during the winter. This family that helped Grandpa, was real helpful to Mamma there at the house. Going back to the twenties, now, we had to draw water, we didn't have no way, we didn't have any lights, just kerosene lamps, we didn't have no way of getting any water, only drawing it out of the well. And that was mine, and my sister's and brother's job to do was to fill up the pot and the tub so mamma could wash, and we boiled our clothes back there then. [00:10:01]

GSB: You boiled them? [00:12:44]

JB: We boiled them. We put them in a big ole black pot, you remember seeing that black pot of mine, that I had here. We boiled the clothes in that pot. We had two big pots because it was a big family of us there in one house. And so, we would have to draw the water, momma wasn't able to draw the water and do the washing too. We helped her reach the clothes, but she wouldn't let us do no washing cause she was afraid we wouldn't get them clean. And we would get our hands in that hot water, but what we boiled with was homemade soap. Made out of lye. It was made out of some grease and potash. And that's how we got our soap to wash our clothes in. But now there was a family in our community that got their water out of a spring. The children would tote the water up the hill, to fill up the tubs to wash in. You see, it was real hard back then for us to keep clean, keep things going. We had the tub water, we had to draw it, and we had on our back porch, we had, granddaddy put up a table there in the corner. We had drinking water, and everybody would drink out of the same dipper. We would draw a bucket of water and set it there, and when anybody wanted a drink of water they would go out and get it. They would drink out the same dipper and use the same bucket. Now that sounds filthy now but that's what we did back then. And so, back in twenty-eight and twenty-nine, were some of the hardest times that we had. We did not have any bathrooms in the house we had outhouses. And so we would have to

walk a long way, and if you had to get in a hurry you would have to run. (Audible laughing from JB and GSB) and if it wasn't for the (Inaudible word/Gusset?) chronicle and there was a little paper, they used to put out called Grits, and we would take that out to the toilet out there when we had to go. (Audible laughing) And then the sale order catalog came along so we would have the sale order catalog. But that was tough times back then because we had to be on our P's and Q's when we had to go to the bathroom. And going back to school too, we could not come home. We lived not too far from that school, but we couldn't come home we had to take a sandwich, and not a sandwich, we took a biscuit. We might take a fatback biscuit or and egg biscuit or something like that. [00:12:46]

JB: And then we were talking just a while ago about growing chickens in the yard. Well, my mother set hens, set old hens, and they raised the biddies, they raised chickens. You know we had enough hens in the yard to supply us with eggs. Our family with used eggs you know, to cook with and to eat. And then she would raise, you would have several hens sitting at one time, and you would have maybe eighteen to twenty little biddies at one time come on. And those biddies grew right fast because they scratched, they got everything they wanted out of the woods, and out of the wood pile and all. They made a livin' out there and momma would take some meal, I have seen her take some meal in a little pan for the little biddies when they were little, and just pour water in it and through it out and feed the biddies in that way. They would grow up fast if you helped them to grow. [00:15:58]

JB: So then comes the thirties. Going back to the schools. The school opened at eight o'clock and we didn't get out till four. The teacher had so many classes, one teacher had so many classes in there it would take them a long time to have school. They would not let us out till everybody turned out. We had to march into school and we had to march out. That was when we were little back in the twenties. And um. [00:17:04]

GSB: Let me ask you, what kind of living conditions were you living in, like your house? [00:17:45]

JB: Well, the house, we had a big house. We lived with Grandma, and for a while Daddy and Momma lived in a little house on Grandpa's place, but Grand Momma got sick, and she stayed sick for about ten years before she died. We had to move into the house with Granddaddy, so that's why we were living in that big colonial home. He had a big colonial home. [00:17:50]

GSB: Was that in Lincoln County? [00:18:17]

JB: Yeah, it was in Lincoln County. [00:18:19]

GSB: Is it still standing? [00:18:22]

JB: No it got burned. It burned in nineteen and thirty. It burned in nineteen and thirty and my granddaddy, borrowed enough money to build another one back because Uncle Andrew and Pert and Daddy and Uncle Harry all were carpenters. And they built the house themselves, but Granddaddy bought the timber and all. But they didn't put the same house back, it was just, it didn't have a two-story. The old home was a two-story colonial home. We had two rooms

upstairs and there were four rooms downstairs. And then off from the house was the dining room and the kitchen. Just a little walkway between the bedroom there from the little hall to the kitchen. And that was our living conditions and we had fireplaces. Granddaddy, going back to that, now the neighbors. We had good neighbors in our neighborhood. One's helping each other. One would see Like Uncle Wildrinker (Name Inaudible) there, his woodpile was getting low and didn't have much wood. Well, Uncle West and my granddaddy and my Daddy would go in together, go in the woods, and get him enough wood to last him a month or two. And the same thing happened to my granddaddy. For our wood, we used to have to tote in stove wood, we had a wood stove. We would have to cook on wood, you know on a wood stove. And that was our chores. My sisters, Burnie, Burnie, not Burnie, Katherine, and me had to bring in the stove wood. That was one thing we had to do, to stack that stove wood behind the stove. And had to have enough to last a day or two. So that was the way it worked back then with the older people. We helped one another; it was a good neighborhood to live in. And if someone got sick the neighbors would come and see what they could do, even sit up at night with them when they were sick. And I know my mamma, one of our neighbors lived there, and she lived about two miles down the road, and she was going to have a baby, she had twins! And she named them after my momma and Aunt Jennie. My mother was a twin. So, when these two twins were born my mother had to go down there and stay with her, you know a while. So, she named the twins Wynette and Jenette. That's my name is Wynette. Uh, my name is Jenette after, Aunt Jennie. And Frankie's name is Wynette after Aunt Jennie, uh my momma. (Wynette) [00:18:23]

JB: So, back in those days it was pretty hard, then the time, uh let me see now, back in thirty-eight and thirty-nine, was when let me see. I believe I was trying to think when we had lights put in. It was back about thirty-four and thirty-five is when the lights were turned on in the community. They run lights out in the country then. So, no we didn't have lights back then, it was back in thirty-four and thirty-five is when the lights come through. But we had before then we had kerosene lamps. And then my daddy somebody told him about a Latin lamp. It was much brighter than these little kerosene lamps because it burned kerosene, but it was much lighter, brighter light for us to study by. So, my daddy bought us one. [00:21:30]

GSB: Let me ask you this. In your neighborhood back then or in this community was there any crime? [00:22:45]

JB: No, we didn't have any, we didn't have to worry about crime. We could go to bed and leave our doors open and windows up. We didn't have to worry about it at all. In fact, in the summertime, some of the men who was working slept on the porch. We had no crime at all back in those days. I didn't hear of any crime at all until I married, when I left home it was still a quiet neighborhood. Everybody was kin to one another and it was very few colored people who lived in that neighborhood. I think about two miles from our house there was a family of colored people that lived down the road, but they would help you, they would work. They loved the white people because white people fed them. And I remember a family that's grown now, all the children are grown but these boys' grandmother helped my mamma with grandma. And when she would leave and go home, she would take a big pile of food with her to feed those children. To feed her children. That was sharing see, we shared with one another. She shared help with us. She helped us, even iron, wash and iron, and clean house but my momma and daddy always paid her by giving her food and stuff to take to the children because their momma was dead, and I

think their daddy lived on a little while later, but she was left with all them children to raise. That's how she got a lot of her money, I say money she didn't get money, she just got food to eat. And they were just like we were. They didn't have any bought clothes, you couldn't buy any clothes anywhere back then cause we didn't have any money. And I remember my daddy raised bird dogs. Now that was back in twenty-five and twenty-six. He raised bird dogs and sold them. And we had a little money back there then, that was in the twenties. It was before we moved in the house with Granddaddy. In the later years were going to the thirties now. [00:22:52]

JB: In going to church on Sundays, let me tell you what we did. My granddaddy, my daddy wasn't able to do much walking, but he did help, go to church and Sunday school. We only had preaching once a month and we would walk to Sunday school. We walked out there. We walked to Sunday school. My daddy would get the young people from up above us there, there was about six to seven of them. They would come down to join us and we would walk to Goshen Church. And why we were doing that, grandpa would always, there was a little store, Bill Shapen's store was on the corner of the path that we come out of and right there, so granddaddy would buy us a cookie, he would get us a cookie or either you could get two pieces of candy for a penny. He would give us a little piece of candy or a cookie before we got any further, that was a long way we had walked just to get a piece and then we would have another mile and a half to go, to go to church. But then he had a short cut though. We cut in and went down by a spring. Down at the foot of our church was a nice spring. That's where the baptismal pool was down there. And he would always make us stop there and get a drink of water. He would take his hat off and dip down in that spring and give us a drink of water before we would go to church. And so go on up the hill to the church. Now this is the truth, Brad, this is how we had to live back there then. If we went to church we had to walk. Back in the thirties though now, Grandpa and Daddy went in together and bought a T model car and we would go to church in that T model car. Cause Daddy would drive us to church we didn't have to walk that distance. Most of the time in the summer months we would go in a wagon. Back in twenty-eight, twenty-nine, and thirty, somebody would come along in a wagon he stop and get all of us young people we would go for a tractor meeting we called it then, it was a revival meeting. We'd have that once a year. And we would go to church in that wagon. Then it would be dark, sometimes it would be dark when we got back. That's the only way we had going to church, at night for the revival. [00:25:45]

GSB: Was the church very crowded? [00:28:37]

JB: Yeah, we had a big crowd back there then. Because there was a lot of people living in that neighborhood. A lot of people. All of us were cousins though. Most all of us. So wherever we went during the day time we would have to walk. Until we got the car but we didn't go very much. Momma didn't go because she put in quilts, she would have quilt-ins and invite the neighbors to help her quilt. And they would almost quilt that one quilt in a day's time. They would have six around the quilt. We were children, we were little kids but we knew what they were doing. And the other ladies of the community did the same thing. [00:28:40]

GSB: Let me go back to the living conditions. What did y'all like sleep on? [00:29:37]

JB: Oh, the sleeping, that was something funny. My mother made, now we had some mattresses, but we didn't have enough to go on all the beds. So, when the pea trash come along, momma would make a big ole thing, we could put straw in to make a mattress. And we would put straw in that mattress every year. For us to make a mattress to sleep on. They had slats on the bed you know. And then, he would put the mattress on those slats. And then we can mash it down to where we could put a sheet over it. No, we put a quilt over it first and then put the sheets over it, and the cover. But the bed looked nice after you got the hay or straw, whatever it is, settled down. [00:29:43]

GSB: Was it comfortable? [00:30:40]

JB: No, it wasn't comfortable, but we had to sleep on it whether we would like to sleep on it or not. Then every year we would have to empty that hay out and get some fresh and put in those mattresses. Now not only our family did that, it was all the families in that neighborhood. Cause there was very few mattresses then. And I think the government came along in about the thirties and gave some mattresses to the families. And so we finally got to where we did not have to use the straw. But back there then there was so many in our family you know we didn't have...(the tape cuts off. [00:30:42]

GSB: Well since the tape cut off, I just want to go back to the sleeping part, I mean y'all had the hay. [00:31:33]

JB: Well, in the summertime where we slept, our mothers always made us sun the sheets, uh, the mattresses, we had to put them out every summer. And sun them. Let them get good and hot. The pillows and everything. We had to put all that out and let it get good and hot before we put them back on the bed and they slept so good that night. But then, we had to... (she is thinking) We had enough room in the house for all of us to sleep and it was about eight of us at one time cause my mother's brother was there with us. But now it wasn't too long after that the CC camp (Civilian Conservation Corps), the government let some of the boys go to CC camp to help provide for the families at home. And my brother went. [00:31:38]

GSB: Which Brother? [00:32:51]

JB: Vernon. My oldest brother went to CC camp. And he would send money back home for us to buy some sugar, or lard, or whatever it was that we ran out of. That was in the thirties. About from thirty-four, I reckon about thirty-four to thirty-five. Something like that. And I don't know what year he came out of CC camp, but it wasn't long after that the WPA (Works Progress Administration) started up. The government put out some money to help people work, give them work to do, so they could make a little money in the WPA. And there was a lot of people that got on the WPA to work to make a little money, they didn't make much but it was enough to help. That was during, they called them Hoover days, during the Depression. It was kind of hard for everybody, anybody to make money then. Now that helped out a lot. During the depression, well, maybe it was the depression too, back in the thirties, maybe thirty-five or thirty-six, thirty-five I think it was. I went and worked on the WPA. [00:32:52]

GSB: Now what is a WPA? [00:34:17]

JB: I don't know what it stands for but anyway, I would work at the courthouse to file some papers. Just anything to give you just a little something to do. If it wasn't but for four or five hours, or three to four hours is all we had. And then I remember there was one lady that lived in our community. That her husband died, and she had twin girls and she had another older daughter. She made her living, made her little money, helping people pick cotton. Now when the crops come up, now that's another story. Whenever we planted, when my Daddy planted crops, we had to chop cotton. We had to sit down on the Geuanner sack (I believe she refers to the fertilizer sack calling it Geuanner, a common term used back then) and tote Geuanner to the briar. And had to go get water for them whenever they were planting the cotton. And then when it come up we had to chop the cotton. And corn, we had to thin corn. Chop the whole of corn and then put (sodium?/word unclear) on it. I done it many a day when I was little. Daddy would have to have some help because he wasn't able to do all that much. But he did, he worked. He planted his cotton, and they would borrow enough money, around seventy-five dollars a year and that's what they had to live on. Unless it was something little new job, a little something that came up where they could make a little money. Like daddy selling those dogs, he raised those bird dogs. It wasn't a lot of money, just a little bit but money back then was money! It was a lot of money. So then, when the corn got up to where we had to thin it we got out there and helped him thin corn. We picked cotton. After school, we'd go to school and then when we got home from school, we had to pick cotton. We knew what we had to do when we got home. We had to go to the cotton field. And then after, let's see. After we come in, we had to stay out there till Daddy let us come home, he wouldn't let us come to the house until he got ready for us to. And we would pick a big ole pile of cotton. Some of us now, going back to this lady I was telling you about that had those twins. She had no way at all of making any money. So the neighbors helped to see that she got food. She got flour, and meal, and stuff like that. It was neighbors helping neighbors in our community. And that's why we weren't afraid of anything, we didn't have to be afraid of anything, this lady, when her husband died, she said she didn't know if she could stay there by herself or not. She had a brother that stayed with her about two months. But then she said she wasn't afraid anymore, because the neighbors seen her. They would always go down there to see if she had plenty of food and water in the house. They were closed in. She said they never worried anymore. Cause she knew the Lord was going to take care of her. And he did, he saw her through. So when the WPA started up in, thirty, no, it was in thirty-two, thirty-one or thirty-two, I believe that's when it was because she rode our school bus to town, she had a job, she road our school bus to town to make a little money to buy here a little something, whatever she needed. And she would chop cotton. Those two oldest girls of hers would get out and she would too. And chop cotton for different people around the neighborhood so they could make a little bit of money. Now, my granddaddy, she helped us all the time. And he always had a little extra money, he had a little money, and he would pay her to do all that. Pay her children. If it weren't but fifty cents a day, that's what they got. So, she was a big help to our family, and we were a help to them. And so, it was just a great big family living together in the neighborhood. And there were about seven or eight homes in our neighborhood. So we had a ball game during the summer, summer months. My brother pitched ball. We had baseball, that was our entertainment. During the summer months, was when several of the men would get together and play ball. Play baseball. [00:34:19]

GSB: So y'all did relax and have some fun? [00:39:47]

JB: Yeah, we did. During the summer months, we did have fun. Oh, and another thing, we had a hole that had water and a dam in the branch, (this part is not entirely clear) we'd go down there and dam up a branch and go in swimming. [00:39:50]

GSB: Oh really! [00:40:01]

JB: Yeaah, in the summer months it would be so hot you know. And momma wouldn't let us go in there by ourselves, they went with us. We went down there and jumped in that hole of water nearly every day. We would just have a good time. So, we didn't know anything about dancing until thirty-five and thirty-four. I had an uncle that (stayed/word unclear) down our place. He played the fiddle, and my other uncle played the guitar. And one of the boys that lived above us, he played the guitar. So, at that time, then we started having the round dances. The square dances, ole timey square dances, (Audible laughing from both) But we couldn't go unless Uncle Harry and Andrew Phil the players wanted to play for the dances. We could not go without them going to. That was the only way we had to get in there. But we had a good time it was recreation going. And the schools, Brad, we had oyster suppers, I don't know what you would, to make some money for the school. Now one man had a, his home was big but he didn't have to many children and they would let us have all sorts of oyster suppers up there. The men would chip in and buy the oysters and the milk, we milked cows back there then. That's the only way we had of getting any milk. We had in our family, we had three cows. And Mamma and Grandpa milked the cows. And we would have fat to make the oyster supper, just about everyone chipped in and got the milk. We charged seventy-five cents. I believe it was seventy-five cents a bowl or two bowls or something. Seventy-five cents is what we got for, to get filled up on oyster stew, oyster stew. And they brought them little crackers, they brought them little bitty round crackers. So, everybody got filled up on seventy-five cents. But it was a big help to the school. And then we put on plays. Some of the younger set then. Like our mommas and you know the neighbors put on a play up there. We had a schoolteacher that loved to act you know. And so they built a stage in our schoolhouse for us to have this play. And I was in it. Most all of us was in it. My daddy was in it. My momma was in it. And all of our children's mothers and fathers put it on. We made I don't know how much money for the school. We thought twenty-five dollars was a big thing, but we made more than that. And then on the play, the people would come and see the play. We would have it maybe two nights a week. So we would make up money that way, to get some little stuff we needed there in the school house. [00:40:03]

GSB: Did y'all have a lot of materials in the school, like a lot of books, paper? [00:43:24]

JB: Well, no, we had to buy our books back there then. We bought our books, but they weren't much. It didn't cost much. So sometimes the superintendent would come around and bring some books. He would come around and leave some books at the schoolhouse. The old spelling books and stuff like that we had to buy all those. And we had some when our house burned but we don't have them now. The old books when I first started school. We had them then, you know, and I wish I had them now because we could certainly, learn a whole lot now by going back over them. The arithmetic books, and history books, and I loved geography. That geography book was thick, and it was good. We studied that real good. You know the teacher always; I think she loved geography too. [00:43:30]

GSB: How many teachers did you have? [00:44:32]

JB: We had one teacher. [00:44:34]

GSB: And that was it? [00:44:36]

JB: One teacher, and it was the first grade through the sixth. First grade through the sixth grade. Back in, let me see, I believe it was nineteen thirty-four, and thirty-five, is when they put on the school buses, they consolidated that little school up there. And then we had to ride the school bus to Lincoln. And then, when we left that school, they put us back a grade. Cause we were way too far back for them to go on with the class down there. My brother, he didn't get put back he was smart. Abbot was smart. And they didn't put him back, but they put us back. (Audible laughing) You didn't know what grade you were going in when you left that little school up there. So, I really know you know, how, we uh, we all, we finished school together. All three of us finished together. And Daddy told us, he said I tell you what. I worked my fingers to the bone to put y'all through school, through high school, so that's as far as I'll be able to do. He did. He worked you know to give us clothes and things because momma would have a little extra money if Daddy sold some feed or something, thrashing peas. Now he would have a sack and give a man they bought the pea thrasher; he would have a sack. I reckon it was a bushel. I think that's what it's called. Cause Watson got a bushel, and my Daddy got a bushel. If Daddy wanted to sell his peas that was alright. He went all over Lincoln County, all over Lincoln County, and sometimes when he went way up in the up end of the county, he would have to spend the night. [00:44:37]

GSB: Now, where would he sleep? [00:46:34]

JB: He would sleep with somebody up there. That he thrashed peas for. And they looked forward to him coming every year. To thrash them peas. And that was something else we had that we could eat, dry peas. And so, we didn't go hungry during the Depression days. We had plenty of food. And I remember one day, one week there, the government put out some clothes. I think, Lincoln County was allotted so much. And Mr. Joyce Murry, not Joyce, Mr. Fortson Murry, come by the houses up through there, and the younger men, brought clothes for the men. So, the girls didn't get any, but the men got some pants you know, and shirts. And so that's one thing, I think that's along about the time the WPA came around. No, no it wasn't, it was CC camps. That's when they went in CC camps about thirty-four and thirty-five. And so, I remember, when I finished school in thirty-six, Vernon, my brother, was in CC camp. He sent momma enough money to buy me a class ring. [00:46:36]

GSB: Oh really? [00:48:02]

JB: He did. He bought my class ring. And somebody give Vernon, Chunky hers. (I believe it is her sibling) And Momma and Daddy bought Abbott's. And that was hard for him to get three of us through school. And I remember, I was working. That was back in thirty-five. Thirty-four and thirty-five is the summer I worked out here at Lincoln at the courthouse. I worked for the county agent, and I was filing some papers there, and he wanted, he showed me how to do it and I did that for about, I think we worked for about four hours. Three to four hours. And I got about

seven dollars a month. I believe that's what it was. Seven dollars a month, or either fourteen dollars a month I forgot. Well, Daddy said, well I tell ya, all of you finishing school, I don't know how I get enough money to buy you evening dresses and all this for ya. So, he went out to Cud Watson's cars. And he let him have Seventeen dollars. He borrowed seventeen dollars from Cud Watson. To get our evening dresses and to get us fixed up to graduate. And I paid that seventeen dollars back working on the WPA. And so that's how, that was during the depression days, too. Depression days come on up to about forty. Now the wage-an-hour law went into effect in thirty-eight and thirty-nine. That's when the wage-an-hour law went into effect. That is when people, the jobs, they started getting jobs, a little work at the plant, the sawmill and things that were ran in the country. I don't know how much they would get an hour, thirty cents an hour I think is what they said. And this man I was talking to said he brought home 12 dollars a week working at the plant over here in Lincoln. And most everybody had a little job if it wasn't but four or five hours a day. But you know that wage-an-hour law went into effect then and they had to pay for them. During that time, all of the Depression times, neighbors were still helping neighbors at the end of the Depression. [00:48:03]

JSB: Now let me ask you this, I want to go back. I want to go back to the living conditions. When you say you were going to the outhouses, where did y'all take a shower at or a bath? [00:51:02]

JB: Oh, we got in the washtub. When we got through on Monday. Yes, that's something we should have brought in before now. But when we would get through now, we'd draw a tub of water put it in the hot sun, and let it get warm. and we would get in there at night. [00:51:10]

GSB: Oh really? [00:51:29]

JB: Yeah, that's what we'd do, we get in there about after the sun goes down before the water got cold. That's how we did it. And then momma would heat water on the stove for us to get in the tub in the winter months. She would heat a big ole dishpan full of water. See, we didn't have no sinks at that time. [00:51:31]

GSB: Oh really? [00:51:49]

JB: No, we didn't have no sinks. We just had two big dish pans. We'd wash the dishes in big dish pans. I would wash the dishes and Chunky would rinse them and dry um. When momma cooked supper she said alright now y'all take over the kitchen. And so we would have to clean up the kitchen. And she would have the water hot for us. So, we would wash the dishes and dry. We didn't have no sink like we have now. Uh-uh, wasn't no such thing back there then. And the lights come through here about um, I think they started with electric lights about um, in thirty-five, about thirty-five electric lights started coming to the country. Rural laborers. And we had lights then. But now I married in thirty-eight. And when I married and went with William, his Daddy at that time did not have lights. Because they didn't get them to all the rural country. So he had a Delco system. We had lights, he had the house wired for lights, but we used the Delco system. We had lights over there. I married in thirty-six, when William, when your granddaddy was making eight dollars a week. Eight dollars a week. [00:51:51]

GSB: Did you do any chores or anything around the house? [00:53:36]

JB: Chores? Yeah, we had to bring in stove wood, we had to sweep up, make up the beds. [00:53:41]

GSB: Did you cook? [00:53:45]

JB: No she wouldn't let us cook, she said we was too (extravagant?). She wouldn't let us cook, she said we was too (extravagant?). Now, we had to do the cleaning up. Was our chores. We had to bring in the house wood. We had a big fireplace in the bedroom in there, and um, and that, is when we had to bring in the house wood, firewood, and then stove wood. We knew what our chores were. Now, Bernie's my baby sister, she didn't realize any of this. Cause she wasn't quite big enough. You know, old enough to have to do all this kind of work. And Abbot wasn't to much older, but he did, he done what his daddy told him to do. We'd have to go down to the barn and grind corn off, to go to the mill to make meal out of, make cornbread. Now we children would go down there. Daddy would have the corn already picked out. For our meal, now he didn't send just any kind of corn to the mill for us to eat. He would pick out his good ears of corn. For us to, you know, use to make flour out of. And we didn't have to worry about our flour as long as our wheat held out. So, I don't know how many acres of wheat the had to sell, uh, had to plant to make enough, you know it didn't last, all the flour we had the wheat didn't last all they year. We had to have some extra money to buy flour. And um, so, that's where we got our dresses from. The flour sacks were made out of flour material. And we whatn't all that big then, and it didn't take too much to dress three of us. But momma made our panties out of Geuanner (sounds like she is saying Uanna) sacks. Made our little slips out of Geuanner sacks. And she would make us some, I believe, she made Vernon a pair of pants out of them, Geuanner sacks. And they looked like linen. They were just so pretty and white, they looked just like linen. If you could get all them numbers out of them, but it took you a long time to get all the numbers out. And so back in those days, it was kind of rough on us. [00:53:47]

GSB: Did y'all have to conserve any items or anything like food and clothes, or anything like that to make it through? Or did y'all have enough? [00:56:28]

JB: No, we didn't have enough. No, that's what I was telling you. We had to sell. Now, like Daddy raising those dogs, now he sold them where he probably got five dollars for um. But you could get a sack of flour for a dollar and a half. So no, we had to buy some flour. The flour didn't last. Now meat didn't last. We had to buy fatback. See, it got rancid. We had three hogs a year. And it lasted us a good while, the meat did. Now they wouldn't let us cut the hams until somebody come. We had company, when we had company, then they would cut the hams. Unless we run out of meat and we had to have it. But now, my Daddy raised a good garden. We had a real good garden. But Momma and him both canned beans, they canned tomatoes, they canned everything they could can. I remember one year my daddy canned one hundred quarts of beans. And being conservative now, we didn't have to save back unless momma saved money to buy the lard. Either buy sugar. And sometimes during the summer months, it would be so hot, there was a little store in our community. This lady would buy a big ole block of ice. And she would sell as much as ten cents, a little piece off of it for ten cents. Before we would come out of the field in the hot summer months, Daddy would let us go to the house to go and get a little

piece of ice to have some ice water or tea. It was kind of rough. Sometimes he would leave the field and leave us in the field. And go and crank up the T model and go down there and get the ice. And I seen um, we had a big ole long aluminum water jug and it was aluminum. And he would let his milk, he had to drink milk a lot. And he would let that milk in that jug, down in the well, to cool it, get it cool where he could drink some of it. [00:56:38]

JB: So back in the forties then, we left, see we married in thirty-eight. And your Daddy was born in forty. And we were living in Augusta. No, we were living up here when he was born but right after he was born your granddaddy went to the railroad, he worked for the Georgia railroad. While they were building Camp Gordon down there, it wasn't called Fort Gordon then, it was called Camp Gordon. And we went off to Augusta then. We got an apartment down there. And uh, so, he worked on the Georgia railroad he worked for twelve or fourteen years on the Georgia railroad. But it got to where they put on the diesels. And that cut him back to extra board. He was a fireman or brakeman I think, or something out there. He was working just as hard as they could go. He was supposed to have eight hours off, but they didn't let him have eight hours they let him have about five hours off. While they were building Camp Gordon. That camp down there where the soldiers stay. After we moved, he got a chance to work for the Georgia railroad out of Augusta from Washington Georgia to Camden. (Maybe Camden/word unclear) But most of the runs were from Augusta to Atlanta. And he enjoyed it, he really did enjoy it. But after they went to the diesels on, that cut the brakemen, the firemen back you see. And he had to go back to an extra board. Because he didn't have enough seniority to pull it. But he worked a long time. He worked about fourteen years. About thirteen to fourteen, and um, so, when Milton was born we was in Atlanta, in Washington, Milton come along in forty-two. We were living in Washington then. Daddy was on a little run from Washington to Camden. (Maybe Camden, word unclear) We stayed there for six or seven years. And then he was pulled off of that run and he had to go back to Augusta. Well, it wasn't long before it was time to put Elton in school. Elton and Milton in school. So then, is when I come back home here and settle down at the Blackmon home space. That's where we stayed until he got out of service. He was a (inaudible word); Elton went to service first. Your Daddy went in service first, and then Milton. And then Mike. And then William had gotten... [00:59:30]

BSB: Alright, since we covered the whole outline is there anything else you want to add about the Depression? [01:03:01]

JB: Um, yes. I think the Depression days ended about in the forties. At that time my husband was still working on the railroad, but we moved over near Lincoln. So, the children could go to school. And then, our house burned back in fifty-eight or fifty-nine. And then we bought, we found a little place down here on Kings Way. We bought this little house and that's where I live now. [01:03:06]

Tape End.