

[Edward Puckett—Man

Interviewer—unknown

Transcript by Ja'Quantae Thomas]

Man 1: First, I like to upfront that I am not an authority of economics, nor I am not an authority on the stock market, not I am an authority on why the banks close. I would like to tell you on this day about my experiences with the 30s and possible on the 40s. There were no agencies but we the people were caught up in this economical disaster which overnight faced people without money and lost it in their banks, they lost their stock. a lot of them unemployed. But we did not have any agencies that would say or a script that would say that this is the way we should do it and we do it like this or we do it like this and then like this and it would work out. But, it did not. We did not have those it was the people, the popular, and hard work, sacrifice, anything that it would take to work ourself out of this involvement which would take 10 or 12 years to come out of this disaster. Which was a disaster, but at that time or this time the people accepted that, everyone was happy. I was happy, my parents were happy, my neighbors were happy. Everyone seems to be on the upbeat because they accepted these challenges. In the early 30s the banks had close, if you had 300, which my father had in his checking account. Which was a lot of money back then, but he lost it. He had 5 dollars to his name. people became more and more unemployed because of there were not construction going on, no buildings, practically nothing because people were out of work. At the time of my early youth. my early adolescents, I was living in Hahira Georgia, living on the main road of fair which was US 41. And I live there, we began to notice more and more transits, we called them hitch hikers coming down the highway. And they were easily coming from north to south and think the reason they were coming from north to south because they were hoping that life would be better in the sunshine state in Florida maybe employment.

The railroads a lot of freight trains, maybe two or three they would come through Hahira and we called them hobos and they would come through riding just riding hoping it would be something better down the track. My mother were one of the enjeurest ladies back in those days we did not have freezer locker, we did not even have ice boxes we had ice that we sell in some kind of containment. But these injenuance ladies there we no kinning no kining back in those days but they would reserve and they would take their fruit, their peaches, their watermelon rime reserve which I never heard of since then which was a delicacy since then but they made those which was a delicate thing and many things. And we had a cow that gave 2 ½ gallons of milk a day. We sold. And mother was a good biscuit maker. So, we always had the ingredients to make good biscuits and these hitch hikers they would ask to eat and she would never turn one of them away. She would take one of those biscuits which was a good size, open it up, put a thick good layer over there and give them a glass of milk and they would be on their way. We were fortunate, we had a garden, and we had a cow and. In this garden that's where we planted all kinds of vegetables and our neighbors had small garden so we were fortunate to grow our own food. My father had another little plot of land across town and he planted that one springs in peanuts, nothing but peanuts, I was nine years of age we would bring them to our house in the summer and my mother would bowl them in a big iron pot. And then I would take them and take a tea glass bout this high and this big around and put them in a paper sack and take them down town in Hahira and take them to the tobacco warehouse and sell them for 5 cents a pack. One day I sold 150 packets. 5 dollars and 20cents and I would nicer forget that and blew some off that fell of the ground I sold 40 dollars' worth of peanuts. In turn my mother took the 40 dollars and purchase my school clothing even though was a good centrists and made much of our clothing but she bought me school cloths, I was perfectly happy with that achievement. The next year, my uncle

had a grocery store, the next summer I worked in the grocery store in Hahira, and he hired my to deliver grocery not by bicycles but by walking. And my earning for weeks pay, 6 days a week was \$1.25. Life was gleaming for young people; we did not realize in that time what kind of situation. Preferer my uncle's grocery store he tried to operate it for 2 other years and most of his grocery sells were charges to put on a big laager book and after about years his operating capital ran out and not enough money come to operate the business. So, he closed his business and the store were told later that he took the bugs and soaked them in kirish and burn them because he knew he never recover the money he had left. My father were an artmobile man, and I was an automobile man. He was an automobile man when I was born and this is Georgia and there were a chevelort dealership here and they knew about my father's workman ship and his attitude towards the automobile business so they hired him. Called him to Valdosta and hired him. And he drove back and forward for about a year, year and a half. They finance the car he paid his own gas in it. His pay, sells managers, were 20 dollars a week, so you say well how did people make it? Well back those days you can take 5 dollars or less and buy groceries for a family for a week. And we always still living I was were speaking with her just this morning, but she said to me and it was true that we always had cloths to wear, plenty to eat, but usually not money, there were times that there were 1 cent in the house. Everyone was in the same boat. But anyways my father drove back and forward from Hahira to Valdosta for two years. In 1933, we moved to Valdosta. And at that time, the first national bank had some repositied mortgage homes that could not be paid for and big ole homes, next door to the Carnegie library, which does not exist anymore, but they wanted to sell it my father. He did not wanted but it but he rented the house from these people for two years and finally they kept insisting, let us sell you the house, buy it one your terms and pay it like you want, so he bought this lovely home in 33 excuse me

about 1935, he bought this lovely home for 40 thousand. It was our reminding home until I left. My family left before that we lived before that. So things were not good and things were not bad.

Interviewer: What about your high school days do you

Man: I am going to say this before I get to that

Interviewer: ok.

Man (12:14) : I was umm spend some time . I went junior high school which was just across the street from where I live. And I went to high school. And I would to tell you about the opportunity to tell you about our schools. Our school were very discipline. The teachers, the principles, there were not out of line. If you were out of line, a little bit you remain one hour afterschool. If you got out of line to much, you came back to school on Saturdays. You spent some hours out of school on Saturday. The teachers were paid an estimate of 90 dollars a month. The teachers were committed. Not say they are not committed today. They were committed to teach and what was taught. They were wonderful people. Wonderful people and they did the best they could. And the subject I think were more difficult then. While I was in school. I was always a person that wanted to work. I always enjoyed working. In fact I am 73 years old soon to be 74 and I continued to work today because I enjoyed it. But, I enjoyed working. So, I went to work at the theatre. Now in those days there were two forms of entertainment. There were not television. There was the radio and there was the theatre. And we had this majestic theatre in Valdosta called the rits. And it seated about 1000 people. Including the balcony and they change the programs three times a week. I was most fortunate as a young

man to be able to work there, my beginning pay was.... i worked there on Saturday I as a usher. I went to work 10 am and I work until about 9 Saturday night for 1.50 an day. And then I graduated up were a ushered after school from 2 until 9 for 5.00 a days with fives a week. Would you believe that when I was 18 I was promoted assistant manager at the rits theater in Valdosta. My pay were 15 dollars a week and I could not spend that money. A dollar went a long way in those days. You know at this point for the last few years I've been kinda down on Hollywood. Let me tell you that Hollywood was probably the biggest morale feeler in the 30s that could ever inexpensive if you had the money. You could go for a quarter or dimes for children. Popcorn was a nickel and coke was a nickel. The point I am making about the morale builder for the theatre, was the fact that they either came out of the theatre either laughing or a beautiful story or upbeat musicals. They did put of some wonderful musical. Which took your moral and brought you up and you came out feeling wonderful even though we were living in painful times. Economically strain

My mother, I am going back a little bit, my mother would some days called my out playing and she would say "take this 35 cent and go down town on Patterson street, and back in those days they did not pre-cut you meet they usually cut it as you ordered and the steak would be wonderful meat. And she would bring that meat home and she would prepare it and serve and we would have remaining meat on the table for 35 cent. So I was a little entrepreneur and little business boy and and went to a candy store here in town. And back those days you could sell fireworks. Roman candles, skyrocks and little fire crackers and I ask would you let me have some fire crackers and let me sign them. And they agree to do that but I had no money to buy them. And the managers of Piggly wiggly agreed to let me sell in front of the store so I set up a

little display out there and I sold firecrackers for about 2 weeks. And made myself some money. Quit a bit of money for a youngin back in those days. The conditions in our city or in our area at that time was situation that teenage preagancy were practically, divorce was practically unknown. Crime were practically unknown. We had a very small city gym. We had a very small candy store, and there were very few prisons at that gym. If you went o bed at night chances you would leave you windows up, doors unlocked and keys in the car, you dint have worry about anyone taking anything. Prices even though income were low, very low. Commodity's their for were low also, and you could buy the best chevelot automobile. Let's say 1940 or 41 for less than 700 dollars. If you had the money to buy it. So, things were low.

Interview: let's just continue about or education or enter the service

Man: Yes, lets more on to that

I went to Valdosta high school and it was enjoyable. I played in the band and drums. The people the faculty. Saw fit to try to keep we the teenagers involve in entertainment. And the you ladies were responsible of this and they called them T Dances. And the T dancers we would go there and enjoy ourself and pay the interest few for a quatre or less. We would have the dances in high school and have those at night and there would be shouting and there was not anything out of order and everyone enjoyed ourselves and it was most entertaining to go to those and looked forward to the dances.

I would like almost to dedicate this tape umm to the teenagers for one, older people who went thought things. They were prideful hard working people. Patient people and happy people. We were all in the same boat like I said before. Their was no one to help us. No one food stamps or

welfare anything like that. And grown men if they could get a job early 30s if they could find. A job like construction or any type of labor they would work long hours for 50 cents on a dollar a day with umm their hardword and patience they were able to do this. Groceries wer cheap income. You could buy 24 pound sack of flour for 98 cents. Buy bread in the loaf were unknown of the ladies made unknown bread. The flour companies designed a which was colorful and these ladies would take these prints and make themselves dressing from the flower print and were to proud to do that because possible they not have 10 cent a yard to buy the cloths. That would give you an example of people who do this a half of mile to where I was taping this today was house a big house in the woods. It would called the play house it was a place for people to go and stay if they did not have a place to stay. I never went there but it was always pointed out to me because you can see it form the road. But I think the house. As I got out of high school I went out to moody field Georgia..which was new base that just open after pearl harbor. I played for a service job at the federal government I was asked if I could type. I ksaid yes I am a touch types. They talked with me a little further and hired me. I was happy to have the job was not. The start salary for the federal government was 1200 dollars a year which weas 567 dollars a month. And I serve that job until I went to the US army air core in 1942. Served there for 3 years. After I came back from the serves I went to college for two years

Interview: where at?

Man (30:49): south Georgia college in Douglass. I finally got three years of college to get a degree. By that time you get your legs on it about time to go to work. I went to Albany, Ga for a large corporation in the united states at that time which was rendles tobacco co. and I went for a interview for district manager and was hired on the spot to go to Montgomery for public relations

man and sells representative. Accepted the job and was happy I got the job. But the job paid 180 dollars not a week but per month. So the see the involve from the early 30s even up to 48 was still low. I ran to a friend of mine about my age about a year ago and she and I were chatted and she and her husband made it well in life they did well. But she reminded me that you had to be 15 to get employment at the company she was 14 so she stories a little bit so she could get a job. And our town which crest company its really called the dime store because everything in the store was not below the dime. She was hired and workd on saturaday. She went to worked 8:30 in the morning to 11 at night. And she worked on Tuesdays. So when she go down on Tuesday for Saturday work she make 99cent. The pay was a dollar but they took out 1 percent social sercutiy. Gave her a net earnings of 99 cents. Valdosat was a lively place. Instead of parallel parking you parked at an angle. All the streets like Patterson and all the side street. Our store stayed open late the children up and down the street and was a treatful place just to get off. It was fun time.

Interview: I know before we talked we mention the banks closing can you tell us a little bit about that

Man: I would try but as I said before I am not an economic major or authority. But this is what happen in our hour and around the nation.

The stock market had crash prior of this. Everything was boom. Skycrappers were going up and called it the boom area. The stock market crash before the banks closed and all the entprenuers lost everything they had because the banks was caught up in the boom because they were living in money but with the banks the operating capital themselves ran out and then they didn't have any operating curtain. And the banks did not open that day and there were no money. In those

days you did not have federal insurance on deposit as we had today so they lost every bit with not recover. We have today we have the federal auditor to take out insurance to make sure the depositor had insured up to 100,000 dollars. I was told when the bank close it took many years and the recover about 11 percent.

Interview: did you have any siblings, and did they work?

Man: Yess I had my momma had 4 sons and unfortunley one of the boys died at 14 months and have two other brother who lived their lives has been with the papermill for 40 years and the other one is about to retire form the school system they would always fine friends and good bothers. I went to alabama, wonderful experience. But I always had a spot in my heart for Valdosta which is my home and this is it. I would not want to live anywhere elseother then this place. After about 2 years to come back home. I stayed and was hired by another cooperation which I thought would keep my in Valdosta and it did not work out that way I moved for a promotion. One day I said this is it I think ill go back to Valdosta for good and came back in 1953. And umm spent my lifetime in valdosat in automobile as a salemen. And enjoyed it. This is home.

Interview: can you tell us how long before it picked back up

Man: the bank didn't pick there doors closed they re opened they just did not have a things like bankruptcy lesson and they began to come back to there bankc. Two banks closed in 32 re-open

and close in exist and graduated got it self from its feet. You might recover 11 percent of its lost got it going again.

Interview you were fortunate enough to go to college, was this common for a lot you peers

Man: no I tell you, ill admit this. There were 15 million men in the service and not in the uniform. And 16 million men and few women that were dump in the society in the country. and what we were going to do with them so the government says alright lets have the GI bill and if want to go to college we will pay you tutions and books and pay you 4 to 5 dollars a month. We elected to go to college. We were not inspired after being in the service to become college students but we were.

I want to say this, that some of my enjoyable late teenager and young man life and I want to say this. One of the excited involvements is Valdosta state university. I knew the college when there was 200 girls. Every Saturday night the college had the dance a we would go and it was fun. I don't have a thing in the world with blue jeans or t-shirts or what ever but we young men when went to that dance we had sports jacket, tie. And those young ladies called senior hall there where they would have their dances. I knew Ms. Hopper and one of the sweetest girl you every known.

Unaudible/ cut out from 46:00-48:20

Interview: if you had one things or one things the future generation about the great depression or what you learn it would you go over this

Man: when something that happen you don't dwell you make the best of it and that's what people did. I mention the government and they had to do it and no one complain. If I had the chance to say any situation can be handle and make up your mind and just go do. It didn't go on forever but it did for a long time and do what we can because from my experience in life the more experience I gained and so what people can do is the 30s. he would give anything the would to have lived during the depression and through the 40 and so far. And talk about the big band.

I feel like personally and you [interview] want to accept it but the young people today because the big band era they still playing today. The music never dies. I was fortunate enough to see them come down him. You take Sinatra who still living today. We have about 10 or 12 of the big band. We didn't have television but radio and they were sponsor at or program certain nights a week, but you know play on the radio. Speaking of radio, you had series, you had Benny Goodman, and Mary and anyway people like that and they would have their hour programs and Cincinnati and Nashville that would reach out. But the radio was the big thing in entertainment

Audio stopped at this point.