

Oral history interview with Bessie Kincade Smith, December 6th, 2004.

Runtime: 01:15:00 Hours

Transcript of the Georgia Folklife project done by Clemens Dreinhofer.

Finished April 10th 2023

Laurie Summers (LS); Bessie Smith (BS); Lazaree Thomas (LT)

-Start-

Laurie Summers (LS): Test test. This is a test of the tram to hear my voice if is about five feet away from or three feet away from the clip with the tram level ear test this was Laurie summers field worker for the South Georgia folklife project, preparing to do an interview with the sisters, Bethany Bessie Kincaid Smith and her sister Lazaree about growing up in the Coleman, turpentine camp outside Mineola in Lowndes County, Georgia it's December 6 2004. Laurie summers for the South Georgia Folk Life Project. Test

(Change in surroundings, birds can be heard as well as heavy breathing)

LS: Okay, why don't you just tell me your name and your birth date Miss Bessie?

Bessie Smith (BS): My name is Bessie Smith. I was born August 28, 1936 Days, Florida

LS: Okay.

And tell me your name.

Lazaree Thomas (LT):

My name is Lazaree Thomas

I was born in September 8, 1939.

LS: All right

okay, that should work it.

Uhm Ms Bessie I'm gonna start with you.

Tell me your maiden name and it's Kincaid and you spell that? K I N (disrupted by BS)

BS: C A I D

LS: And your married name is Smith. Okay. And you just told me to tell me again was I, what was your birthdate again?

BS: August 28th, 1936.

LS: and that was in Barnes Florida.

BS: Days Florida Days Florida is right.

LS: DAYS?

BS: Thats right.

LS: What, what part of Florida is that? North Central south? So you what..How old were you when you came here?

BS: I was 15, 16 when I came here

LS: Okay. And are you churchgoer?

BS: Oh yeah.

LS: What, what affiliation what denomination are you? Baptist or Methodist or Pentacostal?

BS: Holynist

LS: And have you had an occupation or a job? What have you done in your life for work?

BS: Oh, I worked in the houses. I worked at Smith nursing home (inaudible)

LS: Is that how you met? Libby Odom's Mother is that that's how I found out about you that she said You sat with her mother when she had Alzheimer's.

BS: I know living them by working in tobacco. And working in the aisles used to work up at and (inaudible)

LS: Right, Okay. What about schooling? Where did you go to school?

BS: When we moved here, I went to...Do you know the school I went to?

LT: No, it was...(inaudible conversation between BS and LT).

BS: I know that was here. But what's the name of the high school?

LT: Hahira high school.

LS: You graduated? What, what year did you finish?

BS: Oh no. I stopped in ninth.

[5:00 Minutes]

LS: Okay. And then could you spell your name for me? Your first name?

LT: Just think about Lazarus, but it's Lazaree.

LS: Okay. And your maiden name?

LT: Moore.

LS: And you have a married name, are you? And what would that be?

LT: Thomas.

LS: Thomas. What is your address? Please?

LT: 203 (inaudible I try) Blakely, Hahira.

LS: And how about a phone? Phone number?

LT: Yeah, why don't give it up too much. But okay, I got it.

LS: All right, that's fine.

LT: I can give it to you.

LS: Okay.

LT: 794 3186

LS: Did you say 3196?

LT: 3186

LS: Okay. And what was your birth date again?

LT: September 8th, 1939.

LS: And, and you were born in Hahira you said?

LT: (Grunts Affirmative)

LS: And how about a church affiliation for you?

LT: Holiness.

LS: Holiness. So you're, you know each other through church to I guess.

BS: She's a minister.

LS: Are you are you the minister at the church?

LT: I'm one, but I'm not the best. Just wanted two minutes.

LS: What other occupations have you had?

LT: Well, my occupation after I finished high school, I was a beautician and did that for many years, then I stopped doing it and now I don't do it anymore. I worked in houses. So I worked in the hospital for years in housekeeping.

LS: And how about education for you?

LT: You didn't understand what I say. I said, You asked what did I do? I said when I finished high school, right? Okay. I'll finish I'll finish beauty Culture. Okay. I was a beautician...for years. But I'm not doing that now.

LS: So was that I guess what I was asking, is that a separate like certification in addition to high school or is that something you studied in high school?

LT: After you get out of high school you go to beauty school do you do become a beautician that means hairdresser, you fix hair?

LS: Okay. So Haihyrer high school?

LT: Which where I finish.

LS: Okay, that's what I was asking you. I didn't... And then you went to and where? Where was the beauty school? What was its name?

LT: It was in Valdosta.

LS: Do you recall the name

LT: The lady was named Williams. I don't know whether the school had a name or not but she was a Williams. The director...and I've been schooled in 55 High School finished Beauty School in 56 and fix hair for years and years. But I don't do that anymore. I worked at Smith hospital for years and housekeeping department after I stopped fixing hair we're in people's houses also.

LS: Okay. All right. Miss Bessie let me start with you then. You said that you moved here in 49 Is that what you said when you were about 14/15 years old and did you move into the the turpentine quarters then with your family at that time?

BS: No not really, we all, we lived with the locals, our...our own place. And then uh we finally moved to lovigan we lieved around the william place. There on the fall. I dont know how many miles from here. I can't really think how many miles that were from here.

[10:00 minutes]

LT: From this side of Mineola?

BS: Where did you stay?

LT: I dont know how far it was.

LS: So was your family sharecropping there?

BS: My daddy was. He wasn't owning no farm but he was sharecropping with turpentine.

LS: So, so you weren't living in the quarters than, you were living out

BS: No we werent living in the quarters then. But if you mean yeah, we were moving into the quarters.

LS: Well, I asked you when when you first came here, he was still working in turpentine. But you weren't living in the quarters. You were living out in this place and um he was sharecropping turpentine for who? Mr. Coleman?

BS: Sally Carter a man named Sally Carter.

LS: You know how to spell that first name?

BS: Sander, Sullie, Sally something like that.

LT: I believe it was something like that.

LS: So you you lived in this place that did the the Carters find that house for you? Where you rented?

BS: Yes.

LS: So they had people working for them that weren't living in quarters they were living in whatever housing they could find out.

BS: Right.

LS: Okay. So how long did you live there?

BS: Uh let me see...must be 4/5 years. And then we moved on to steel walkers.

LS: So that would have been sometime in the 1950s.

BS: Around 50 uh..51, 52, 53 around there.

LS: And so when you first came up here. Do you remember, because you were a teenager then why why your dad left Florida and came came to Georgia to did he come to work in turpentine

BS: Yes

LS: Has he worked Turpentine in florida too?

BS: Ever since I have known him, thats hat he did.

LS: So do you recall why it was he left Florida and came up here?

BS: Well, he didn't like it there anymore.

LS: What didn't he like?

BS: well (inaudible) it was all, it was one of the places to get out of. And he finally got in a place that it was hard to get out of. Back then we were in the woods, that my mother was clear about to try to walk to school. And one of the units couldn't see us. So we left up there.

LS: So did you live in the quarters in Florida? Or were you what kind of living situation?

BS: No, we didn't live in the quarters. That's why he left because the quarters were full of peoples. They don't have no houses. So we had a move out in the woods. You couldn't see nothing but trees. You couldnt even see the houses. I remember two miles out in the woods.

LS: So what kind of place where you live in in there? Well, tell me what your house was like the one in Florida out in the woods.

BS: They we're not good houses back in the day, I tell you. Back in the day people didn't Fix all the houses.

LS: What was it like? Was it one room?

BS: No it wasnt one room. I remember three when the kitchen that made foam and uh bullets (guess!! inaudible). But the houses werent good nah.

LS: Why weren't they good?

BS: Because they wouldnt fix them up.

LS: So did they leak?

BS: The leaked. When it rained it would leak and you had to preotect your furniture. And that was because they wouldnt fix them up.

LS: Were you renting then from the man who ran the place?

BS: No, the let us stay in the houses for free.

LT: Cause he was working for them?

BS: Right.

LS: That was part of your pay basically was your rent.

BS: Yes.

LS: So it was free but it wasn't free in that sense right

BS: (Affirmative grunting)

LS: And so how about the furniture was the furniture your?

BS: Yeah the furniture was ours. It was our furniture.

LS: So how many brothers and sisters did you have?

BS: At that time? I had it was three brothers and eight girls.

LS: And where do you come? What number are you?

BS: I was a twin so we the oldest.

LS: The oldest period or the oldest girl?

LT: She's a Twin.

BS: We the oldest girls. We were the oldest girls.

LS: So we're there were there boys then that...

BS: Well the boy that was older than us was Lille. He passed when I was a baby.

LS: So you and your sisters your sister still living?

BS: No, she's not living.

LS: Were you identical twins?

BS: Yes

LT: I was just waiting till you tell about it. (Chuckling)

LS: Tell about what?

LT: The twin. That she was a twin.

LS: So did your sister die young or was she..?

BS: Yes she died kinda young. Uh. I think she went dead but Uh..but I did I said good luck. I know that. She's been dead there and I know but as soon as I mean....

LS: What was her name? Your twin?

BS: Essie Mai.

LS: Do you spell Mai M A I?

BS: Yes

LS: I forgot to ask that.

BS: She must be dead about 20 years by now. Maybe a little more.

LS: So she grew up with you right there in the turpentine camps when you were girls?

BS: Oh yeah.

LS: So when you said that your your dad didn't like it...

BS: I made a mistake, Mannie was the oldest one yeah that was a big mistake man and oldest wanted (inaudible) then there was a boy, and then a girl. My mother had 15 Children.

LS: My goodness.

LT: Thats like my great grandmother. My great grandmother had 22 Children.

LS: Oh my goodness.

LT: My family is a big family. And she was in slavery and somehow to get pushed in the first time or burn one or breath Oh, she had the nurse all her children up on one breath.

LS: 22

LT: 22 head of children.

LS: That's a strong woman isnt it.

LT: The lord was with her.

LS: Now will you until you were eight years old. Did you live in a? Your father was always working in turpentine right? So but this is the first place you remember the one you're telling you about right now out in the woods?

BS: I dont remember no place but this one. Just this one.

[20:00]

LS: What did you and your...your daddy was working in the woods. What did your mama do?

BS: My mama..she was doing all the housework. But in this particular place she maybe called... she had a small baby.

I remember another place up there around Homerville there was this place called Weathers. That was a nice place to meet. And in the houses one day it was pretty good houses.

LS: So when you say that was pretty nice. How was that different than the place you were telling me about?

BS: That was because people tried to keep it up. That's what I remember when I first went to school I remember that I was old enough to remember that. And adults go in a house. They have no school like they got

LS: This was in Homerville you're talking about?

BS: Yeah.

LS: So somebody had a school for the kids in their house.

BS: No somebody would let them use the house... for a school.

LS: Was it in the quarters then?

BS: Yeah in the quarters.

LS: And who were your teachers?

BS: My teacher was, her name was Alice.

LS: Did she live in the quarters too or did she come in from the outside to teach kids.

BS: No, cause she was my cousin. She was the only teacher for the kids. She was the only one come in and talk.

LS: How many Students do you remember.

BS: I cant rememeber. About 10 or 15.

LS: Did the boys go to school too?

BS: Yes the boys went to school too.

LS: And what time of year did you have school? Was it in the wintertime or?

BS: It was in the Wintertime. I know that because it was freezing cold. (Mumbling)
We would have to walk to school.

LS: You were saying something about schools Ms...?

LT: I was thinking about when we went to school a long time ago they had them big pot belly heaters and they put I think they put a lot of wood and different kind of wood and I think

some of them they put coals in too and that thing be so red hot is it is going to be a good moment. (Chuckling)

LS: How many months a year do you remember going to school was..just in the winter when when the they weren't working in the woods so much or?

BS: Nah they never would quit working in the woods. They would work year round in the woods. Cause they would have so many miles they had to go out then. Getting all the cups. And they had (inaudible)...

LT: Turpentine came from the tree?

BS: Yeah. It came from the trees. You could see it running from the trees. They had some like a scraper, scrape the tide, they had little cups. I dont know what they did call them. And then they had a bucket. Go and put that turp, we call it turp. I dont know what they call it now. And they would take all that til they got that bucket full. I dont know how many trees they would have to do, but they got that bucket full. And when they get that bucket full. They would go and bring it to the mill. And sometimes my daddy would

[25:00 Minutes]

Sometimes...(inaudible)...

I don't remember how many buckets they would have to poor in that bath, and then they get that bath full. And then again bear that for a living. I dont know...and then would come a truck and load it all up.

Somtimes my daddy (inaudible)....
and do what they call a steel water see.

[Inaudible Minute 26:00 to 27:00]

They would scrape them. That's where was all the money at. They would scrape them all, scrape them pretty and clean. And they may go like the Rum in the can.

LS: Did you ever know any women to work in the woods?

BS: Oh, yeah, I know, but I cant think of any name now. But I know some who were..(dirrupted by LT)

LT: working in the woods with the men.

BS: Oh, yeah. Some of them were just in the woods with the men.

LS: Was that unusual?

BS: To me it was.

LS: So it wasn't common, but there were there were women who did it. But what what did women generally do when the men were working in the woods and if they weren't where were they going to work?

BS: My mama would go to the houses to work. And they were what some would call a maid.

LS: Who did she work for? Was it the boss man's wife or women in town?

BS: Sometimes.

LS: What did you do as a girl growing up during the day? What if you weren't in school? What were you doing?

BS: Stay home and watch...when we was little she would leave us at home by myself. She would go to work. She would go in the morning up going until afternoon.

LS: So if you remember just growing up part of the time you were living out in a house outside the quarters, but then when you came here you were living in the quarters right when you came here to...here to..

BS: When we came up to the Steerwaters.

LS: And that was for Mr. Coleman.

BS: Earl Coleman.

LS: And we were also living in quarters over and hey Hahira Excuse me over by Homerville between Homerville and Waycross.

BS: Yes

LS: And that was before you moved here.

BS: Yes.

LS: Okay. So you came from Florida up to Homerville way and then you came over here?

BS: Yes. Yeah, we came from Florida up here.

LS: I just wanted to go back to something that you said I know you were pretty small but you said you left your family left Florida because your daddy didn't like it.

BS: Me didnt either.

LS: You didn't like the house you were living in?

BS: Nah it was to foul then and then like the man who was working for

LS: why not? What was causing that..

BS: Because they tried working them as slaves. They wanted the people to work like slavery

LS: Tell me a little bit more about that.

[30:00 Minutes]

BS: Well that like uh...maybe means...they've been wanting you to go nowhere. And they would all try to find somebody to watch you like when they leave. You couldnt leave, you had to stay right there. Oh my daddy just slipped away. We slipped away from there by night.

LS: What do you remember about that?

BS: Well, I can remember we ended to slip away. Look all of the man was so mean. Not nice to white folks...I mean coloured people.

LS: Was your boss man white?

BS: Yeah.

LS: And how did you do you remember how you traveled? Did you have to walk? Did you have a car?

BS: No we didnt have no car back then.

LS: So how did you get to Georgia?

BS: Salie Carter. Oh god god bless the men. He brought us on a bus. Right from Florida. My daddy was share cropping for him. I dont know how he find us, but he helped us get away.

LS: And so that was the one that you worked for first when you came here?

BS: Yes.

LS: What about Homerville?

BS: Well, that was nice. The mayor was nice. He didn't bother you. He was nice to the peoples.

LS: And Mr. Carter here was nice to your family too.

BS: Oh, yes. Yes. He was real nice. Yeah he had his own place and he had trees he wanted work, because he didnt know how to do that either. But my daddy did. He was a farmer. He was a farmer, but he wasn't a white man he was no white man.

LS: So Mr. Carter was a black men.

BS: Yes

LS: Okay.

LT: And those trees that they will get tough on with it with the pine tree.

BS: Yeah.

LS: How about the man and Homerville that you worked for? Was he white or black?

BS: He was white.

LS: So here are you you. You helped Mr. Carter with his trees. And then after several years you moved to the Coleman still quarters.

BS: Yes.

LS: Okay. Do you remember why? Why Your daddy changed jobs and started working for Mr. Coleman.

BS: Well uh Mr. Salie Carter...trees...uh....he didnt got but a few and they went when they went to see, thats why he come on over to Mr. Colemans.

LS: What do you remember about the Coleman place? What was what was the housing?

BS: They were nice peoples. They were nice peoples. I didn't mind what colour was them, and he didnt either. Cause they were real nice people.

LS: What was the what was the housing like in the quarters there?

BS: They were small but nice houses.

LS: How many how many rooms do they have?

BS: They having three rooms and a porch.

(Small conversation between a neighbour and BS as he seems to comeby)

BS: They are...some of the houses were big, some of them small. But at that particular time they had one and we moved out there in that one.

LS: Did you have a garden?

BS: My dad always had a little garden.

LS: What did he grow?

BS: Potatoes, Grains and...

LS: And that was just for your family?

BS: Yes for the family.

LS: To be fed..?

BS: Potatoes. There was room for a row of two potatoes. (Inaudible)

LT: Did you say they didn't have just one house out there. They had more than one.

BS: Yes they had to have.

LT: They had to have, okay.

[35:00 Minutes]

LS: Now you said your daddy always had the garden so was that his job? Or did you did your mother your mom and the children help in the garden?

BS: No my mama didnt garden, she did no help in the garden. Us Children would. She didnt mess with the garden though.

LS: Did she put up any of the food?

BS: Yeah, and my dad would find some way and raise a Mule (incomprehensible), he would always do something like that.

LS: If you had a Hog killing would that be just your family or did everyone in the quarters come around and help each other with that?

BS: Well one or two were coming at it, but most of the time we were enought to do all the work in the house, cause he would teach us. He killed a Hog and get out there and he was cleaning, scraping, washing and my dad wouldn't, he couldnt...and we would watch him clean the cups. Cut him up my daddy cut him up. And like in the end, they will let you use our house. You know to cook, but nobody lived in, to smoke them.

LS: Aha okay so you had a smoker.

LT: She don't know about it. But long time ago. We didn't have no refrigerators. They had an icebox, an icebox was made it had tin in the bottom of it and asked me to come round, lets say about once or twice a week or something like that and you get...he would say you it will kind of pleased you won't. And you put the ice that he brought in the icebox and that's how you kept your meat but you smoked meat for like if you kill a big kill like a hog or something like that, like she said they had a smokehouse and somehow they smoked that meat and it would be so good.

LS: Was that was that house in the quarters then when you're talking about?

BS: Yeah

LT: But in the country they made made Smokehouses.

BS: Yeah they made it in the country.

LS: So during the day you were telling me when you were growing up you would you would help take care of the younger kids?

BS: Yeah. We had to take care of the younger kids.

LS: What sort of games do you remember playing growing up?

BS: Hobscotch, Jump in row, made the Hula Hups. We would get out and play hula hups.

LS: Did you make the hula hoops or did you buy them?

BS: No you had to buy them. Now you would draw the Hobscotch. You would get out there and draw them in the yard. Hop on it, peace and play time there all. (Inaudible, something with Hobscotch)

LS: Did you have very many toys?

BS: No we didn't had that many toys. We did not, you know we were not the persons for toys and stuff. But I remember they would get us something to play with on Christmas.

LS: What do you remember?

BS: I remember playing with dolls and one year they bought us all bicycles to learn how to ride and I kinda put you, without a a bicycle we all had to get a beating so we I never learned how to ride a bicycle, cause they told us not to get on them. We could all remember brother, he got hooked in that chain. And we did not know how to get him out of there. And we all got a beating. So I never learned how to ride.

LT: No Bycycle.

BS: I don't want to see that.

LS: Was the dolls storebought dolls or were they homemade dolls that you remember?

BS: They were storebought dolls.

LS: Did you make any any toys? Anything to play with?

BS: (Grunts negative)

LS: So did the girls play different games than the boys?

BS: No, we were not many boys. We tried to do...

LS: Did you play ball?

BS: We played ball, we climbed trees. We climbed trees, played ball. We learned to coordinate in the woods. You know look at the time still dripping. We all learned how to coordinate sizing.

LS: Did the boys work with your daddy?

BS: Yeah after they got older.

LS: How old would they have been when they started working?

[40:00 Minutes]

BS: They started when they got 14 or 15. Cause one day they werent going with us to school and they started with my daddy. And my daddy sometimes were gonna sent, he didnt have to do it, but people would mess around the house, he would have to. Back then they would have them old wooden stoves and most on Sunday we got out and cut wood. You know all of them dead trees, and pine trees, and oak trees, and we would toe that wood back to the house. When we wasnt at church, but we always most was in church and we would have to do it. After we get out of church.

LT: You would always try to get a lot of the good wood cause when you starten the mess it takes a lot of that to make that oven really burning it.

LS: Tell me about church. Was there a church right in the quarters or where was the church?

BS: No we would have to walk to Hahira. Now listen they also put up a (inaudible) but church has always been in Hahira.

LS: Do they sometimes have a tent meeting?

BS: Yeah, every now and then. Not often.

LS: When did the church, just once a month or how often did you have church?

BS: Yeah once a month. When they had to do that.

LS: But what about just going into Hahira was that every Sunday?

BS: Yeah we come about every sunday to Hahira. Every sunday, every sunday we were in Hahira.

LS: So you didn't have, Mr. Coleman didn't provide transportation to the church?

BS: No. We had to walk. And that was a mile or about two miles...?

LT: Apparently so.

BS: Maybe three miles we got up there to the church.

LS: You went every Sunday?

BS: Not every Sunday.

LS: See you've got a preacher woman here so you find out how often you went to church.

BS: She went the most out of all of us (referring to LS about LT). Mr. Reuben, God bless the man, he was our father since the Sunday school. He would come and give us all a prayer. And as we got acquainted with him he would take us up. I don't know how he got that car so loaded. Ten in the car.

LS: But that was later right.

BS: Well that one was still in Stillquarter.

LS: So you would go over to the stillquarters and pick up people?

LT: You would go and pick up people to take them to church.

LS: Never have a bus or truck or a car

LT: That was a car. So they don't have to do two loads. Because they had much to do.

LS: Where were you living at the time?

LT: I lived over here, (Incomprehensible city name). I've been here for years and years.

LS: Just listening to Ms. Bessie talk about her memories growing up and you said your...your daddy was in sawmilling is that?

LT: You know the mills?

LS: So you live in Sawmill quarters?

LT: No, I lived over here. But when I was a little young girl. I think we moved. We lived in the country. I'm in my house where we lived in the country. When I was big enough to remember. Then we moved in town and we've lived over here like you say the houseworking school and all like that and it was it was Mr. Isaac Maria you remember. He had a house here in town and my cousin lived there. Me and my mom and dad moved in one room with it with the chief lady build the house over here and she moved in the house with the Lady behind

me and we had the whole three rooms and four rooms. And we just rented from Mr. Maria for that was his house.

And we have been on the hills and that was ours but four or five years away at that time when it happened and I've been here ever since my husband came to Hahira and we got married and he stayed here too. He is from Alabama but uhm I've been over here on this year for years. Most of my memories over here.

LS: Some of the people that I've talked to a lot of them that lived in camps or were renting or you know working for a sawmiller or maybe were renting a home from the boss man or whatever. They would get a lot of supplies and stuff from a commissary did that?

[45:00 Minutes]

BS: Right, we had a commissary, but only at mid hour. My daddy would buy groceries barely at the commissary and uh they had pretty good stuff, they had pretty good stuff. And then we would come Hahira when my daddy got paid. I...I cant remember when daddy got paid.

LT: I don't know when your daddy got paid. You have a bigger crookerr say that's where he put groceries and loaded that into a (its a guess) bigotcruqousay. That mean they throw it on the back and and they walk all the way home where he gets somebody to take his home and pay him for taking him home because he bought groceries.

BS: And I remember when they just come to the middle when we live in all alone on the still quarters and things and they were rashing. They would give all so many coupons. (Incomprehensible: Something with debt and coupons and how they would come to Valdosta to buy groceries with her daddy apparently...something like that)

LS: Like you could use those coupons in a store.

BS: Oh yeah, you could use them anywhere in the stores. Buy shoes, buy clothes and I can remember aah they used that when the flower a random column Croco sites. So you could take a look closer at them.

LT: Yeah after you get through it Yeah. Make your little dresses add a little crocosite go ahead put a little flower like you say in it.

LS: What about rolling stores? Did you have anything that came up to the quarters?

BS: Oh yeah yeah, yeah forgot about that. Yeah. I'm saying they will come, the will come. Mondays and Fridays, they will come twice a week.

LS: What kinds of...they come from Valdosta? Where did they come from.

BS: Yeah they did come from Valdosta. And they had every kind of meat you wanted on there. Cause they were selling them out of something like a icebox. A long icebox and they out everykind of meat in there. Even fish.

LS: Did you get fish to from going out and just fishing in the...?

BS: No I am not a fisherman.

LS: Your family, how about them?

BS: None of us were a fisherman.

LS: How about going out hunting or something? Did they get any extra food for the family that way or?

BS: No.

LS: So everything that you got came from the commissary or you bought it from a store or you got it from your garden?

BS: Garden and uh runnings.

LS: How about any peddlers would come through the camps? Jewish peddlers or...?

BS: Oh yeah. Some were selling candy on the trucks, I mean cars uhm. Some other would come by selling cheese, pillowcases and clothes. Well were of no interest for them.

LS: Why was that?

BS: Well you ahd to have money.

LS: Did you ever have storebought close?

BS: Oh yeah.

LS: You did

BS: All the time she would try to buy us clothes.

LS: Did you sell your own clothes though make your own clothes?

BS: No

LS: No. So your mama didn't sew or teach you how to sew?

BS: Oh yes my mother would make us some night slips. But she always tried to go and buy us clothes. But she used to handmade slips. But our pants she would buy them. Our clothes...they were always trying to keep us looking nice, cause there was money in timber.

LS: There was money.

BS: What you really made your money with was timber.

[50:00 Minutes]

LS: So you don't think that? You know you were spending all the money that your your daddy got, you know, for the equivalent of rent for your house or for the food in the commissary? You're he actually made money?

BS: Yes.

LS: So you think it was pretty good living here in the Coleman quarters? The Coleman Still quarters.

BS: Yeah and it would take out a lot of places, My daddy sharecropped. He sharecropped to get where of our money.

LS: So was that true at the coleman quarters?

BS: Yes. When we first went out there we didnt have a dime. Cause we were there to work for Coleman. Finally he gave it up and his brother took it. What was the name? One brother sold it to the other brother. I frogot what the last brother was named. And then he went to sharecropp.

But those Colemans were som nice mans and wife.

They searched for us very suddenly for some place to live in. And it was nice that we did finally had a home. Finally people did it. And they got and they got us to move. And they were nice people.

LS: So they sort of policed the place to make sure that it was not a lot of...?

BS: No, because if you would have to call for police you would have called from Hahira.

LS: But I mean the Colemans tried to make sure that there wasn't a lot of fighting and stuff going on in the camps?

BS: Right

LS: So you thought that was good?

BS: I know it was good. They were nice.

LS: And were there any white people in the quarters?

BS: Was there any?

LT: I don't remember seeing any, it might have been.

BS: No, yeah one. The second Bossman. They lived in a big white house. Gods know what that big white house was just to sit on there. (Incomprehensible). But they called him the second Bossman.

LS: Like the Woodswriter?

BS: Yeah the woodswriter.

LS: So their kids lived in the quarters. Did you play with them?

BS: Oh, yeah. Yeah, we all played together.

LS: And what happened like for entertainment, what did people do for good time?
Was there a juke or a place people went for? To dance or have music?

BS: Lottery just used to had happen to have gotten to the Still quarters.

LT: I dont know.

BS: I know what we was out there to gettin. They would come to Hahira. But I dont know
what they did out there. But I think maybe somebody said they saw some (Incomrpehensible
somethign like Locktalen) go by.

LS: What did you do? Were you allowed to go?

BS: No

LS: No. Were, your brothers allowed?

BS: Yeah. My Brothers was going. Well, we didn't want to go. Me and my sorts were really
cuious. We didnt go to stuff like that.

LS: So you could have gone but you just didn't want to go?

BS: Yea we could have went. I guess? We never asked our mama. So we did not do this.

LS: You didnt find out.

BS: We didnt find out.

LS: You were the oldest so I guess...?

LT: No, she said she remembered she had a sister that was older than her.

LS: Okay, but she passed?

LT: (Affirmative grunting)

BS: Yeah.

LS: What did did your family I mean, I know it was hard work. You remember doing anything.
As a family in the evening. Singing or anything for entertainment?

BS: No I was not saying. And I remember picking the berries. Cause in the woods we can pick the berries. We will pick them, well I didnt pick them. But my sisters picked them. They go to pick them by the turfwalls.

[55:00 Minutes]

LS: Would you make put those up make jam what would they do with them?

BS: My mama was canning them all. My daddy would give away some.

LS: Did you help your mother with the canning? Was that something you did?

BS: Sometimes. A lot of the times I would get in there and tried to cook.

LS: Was that something that was your job? You helped to cook?

BS: It wasnt my job. But i Just learned how to do it.

LS: Did you have chores?

BS: Yeah we had chores. The house we would clean it everywhere.

LS: So you learned to cook though growing up, being on of the older girls?

BS: Yes, I learned to cook.

LS: So did you cook for your daddy and your brothers when they went out in the woods?

BS: Yep

LS: What kinds of things did they take to pack out in the woods? Do you remember what you would fix for them?

BS: Most things they got like we got now but they had a....you know not what they call bushes. Or what they call them?

LS: Syrup buckets? No?

BS: It was something like a syrup bucket and then they had all other kind of things. What were they called?

LT: I cant think of any.

BS: Somtimes they had pieces of rice, chicken, porkchops all like that the things.

LS: How early did the family get up in the morning?

BS: If you had to get into the woods you had to get up by sunrise.

LS: So did everyone get up early then before...

BS: (grunts opposing)

LS:...you just you didn't have to get up that early? So what time when did you get up? As a girl growing up.

BS: At about time to get ready for school, get up. Do you remember?

LT: Oh I lived direct across from school.

BS: Oh you did?

LT: (Grunts affirmative)

BS: We werent close enough to a school, sowe had to carry our lunches.

LT: Do you remember Ms. Mexter? That, she teach, she uh cooked at the lunch room. I'd never did how to eat in the lunchroom. Because I think it was 10,10,10 or 15 cents or something like that. I never eat that portion or like I say I lived right across. Ocver at Miss Maria's house. School campus was where them houses was this area where the places were just a big open field. Is a big open field, Mr. Lee Rostov's field.

BS: See, now i never would go home because I didnt have enough time.

LT: No you went to the school over there you just didn't public come over this we need this done for God. Because Mr Hugh them you know hate them soldiers. They came out there for the army he told the soldiers go ahead a homemaker anomic teacher to the school and we and she tought us Homeec.

BS: Oh yeah the....

LS: Copeman sisters.

BS: Mr. Ruth McCarney he at the moment he was one of the teachers.

LT: That Billiard was a gray gray and white.

BS: Yeah I remember the billiard.

LT: And the Lunchroom was right down below it and Miss Jose she was, she would cook in the lunchroom and different ones that had this 10 cent and go, or 15 cent whatever it was, go and eat lunch. The one meal a day deal.

LS: But you carried your lunch and you went home for lunch is that what you're saying?

LT: I didn't go to the lunchroom that often. But you could bring it you could bring it to school if you wanted too.

BS: Yeah, I had to carry mine.

LS: Do you all remember Madam Swift?

BS: Ah no.

[60:00 Minutes]

BS: And our loved Salli Carter would come to the stillquarters all the time. And to Hahira. And they would meet with Ms. Swift. But she dead now though?

LS: Right. I heard she passed just last fall.

BS: Yes.

LS: Wasn't she a healer? Tell me about her.

BS: She was like a bartonreader. I would never go to her. But she used to leive out there. But I have never seen her not matter what I did.

LT: What time do we have right now?

LS: Uh it's 2.30 pm. Do I have to unplug you? I am going to wrap up in a few of minutes. Anything else you remember about her? She had a house, she was at the stillquarters than?

BS: Yeah she had a (incomprehensible). She used to live right there. Thats what I know. But you know when people were raising they children back in then. We couldn just slip by there. So we couldnt go there. But I dont know she was coming by my house, but thats what they was saying she was?

LS: Were there stories about her?

BS: Well I dont know to much about her.

LS: Just want to ask you two more things one was about what you did for medicine? Would you go see a doctor or were there any kind of home remedies that you used?

BS: Lot of times people make their own home remix.

LS: What do you remember

LT: How they were fixing up I don't know what they put in. All I know I took it. (Chuckles)

LS: Did they use turpentine for, for medicine?

LT: (confused mumbling)

LS: If you remember using turpentine for medicine ever? Like mixing it with sugar, water or putting it on a cut or anything like that?

BS: Well my mama, you could just get out to the trees, and get it. So turpentine was it. I remember putting some on sugar, giving it us for a cramp in the stomach. I can remember that.

LT: I had to get something for cramping stomach. Because my stomach was cramping me every month. And my grandmama would always bring something from the woods, and I would take it because I was hurting. And then it ease you off. What they put in there I do not know. (Chuckles)

LS: Miss Bessie What was your mama's name?

BS: Lily.

LS: What was your maiden name?

BS: (tries to say her maiden name but no one understands)

LT: Did you say Fulton?

LS: Fulton, okay. And your, your daddy's first name?

BS: Arthur.

LS: Arthur. And you mentioned the last thing I wanted to ask you was about holidays. You mentioned remember that your mama would always do something your parents would do something for Christmas you know you get the bicycles or you are special. In the still quarters what? What holidays do you remember that were that were celebrated there?

BS: I remember Christmas and New Years. They, they all would try and celebrate two days.

LS: What did you do on Christmas, that was different?

BS: Play with all we had.

LS: Did they decorate the house at all?

BS: No. Cheap, no decorator.

LS: Was there any special food?

BS: Yes, they tried to cook something special, like tressing chicken, steaks something like that. I remember one Christmas my daddy kinda unloaded a bomb (its a guess). And

everyone in the still quarters could ride. And the man all were, uh, what did you call that, a woodrider.

[65:00 Minutes]

And my daddy had raised good money. And uh our brother, they would go in that particular thing. And uh that particular Saturday, Friday, cause you always tried to be off on Friday. So here's a little agenda to do on the said. And then they stole every penny my dad had. Every penny. Well that was a big christmas. For all of us. Because he stole all my daddy money. But we got all of it.

LS: Sorry, How did he...I missed, how did you steal it? He sold him...?

BS: No my daddy was to intoxicatet. He was to intoxicated. So the wouldrider would get out there, and they came back and gave my daddy all his money.

LT: It was stolen there.

BS: Yeah

LT: I have to go.

LS: Okay.

LT: I have one of my daughters.

BS: You dont need to elaborate.

LS: Do I have your permission to use any of the comments you made then as part of this project?

LT: It dont matter. I enjoyed, you all and the little while.

LS: Thank you for I think it was good to have a familiar, let me unhook you there, a familiar face and I appreciate meeting you.

LT: Nice meeting you too.

(Little incomprehensible Chat between LT and BS it seems about people they know and the daughter of LT)

BS: Okay bye bye.

LS: So I just just wanted to I know you need to go in a minute. Let me just try and make sure I understand your story. So when he stole all your daddy's money because your daddy was, was intoxicated? Was he going down to be paid?

BS: Not yet. He was coming home. He had drunk a bit and was coming home, than he stole his money.

LS: And who stole his money?

BS: The woods writer.

LS: And he the woods writer would take them down to be paid. Is that how it works? Would drive them down to...?

BS: Yeah to Mineola.

LS: And you had a Blackwoods writer at this time? Do you remember his name?

BS: No, I forgot the name.

LS: When you celebrated at Christmas, was it just your family? Or did any of the families in the quarters visit each other or do anything together att the holiday times?

BS: Well not all of us got off at the holiday everytime and we all would play together we had some prayers out there. We had and told our friends.

LS: And how did you socialize? What What would you do together with play?

BS: Oh we played. We all sure played, like I said, we would all love to jump Hobscotch. Jump Hobscotch or...you know...try to be a little play in the house where we were cooking and stuff. We enjoyed each other wherever.

LS: You said jump rope. Do you remember any of the jumprope rhymes you had?

BS: Oh, yeah.

LS: Could you tell me one?

BS: Yeah, we would.

(It seems like she describes the game of Jumprope, but I can not understand the words)

And you would jump so till dawn. You get tired, turned up away and jumped.

LS: Did you have any little rhymes that you said while you were turning the rope?

BS: Yeah but I cant think of them. I cant of them rhyme now.

LS: So what about what about New Year's? You said that was something special that you remembered what happened on New Year's?

[70:00 Minutes]

BS: Oh Yeah, they had special meal they would pick for new years. Like peas, rice, collard greens and I got beef. Good lord. And uh collard greens, that was money.

LS: Did the bossman ever provide any food or anything special for the workers at any time of year?

BS: He would always give them some money for christmas.

LS: Did the kids ever get anything from the bossman?

BS: I guess the money was put up by the kids. Because it was you know to give them a good meal. I dont know exactly how much money it was, but I know he gave them money. I remember what that was for the kids, cause my daddy always let us get up and come to see him. (I think

LS: Why not?

BS: Cause we was girls come hangry now you will get involved in sometime.

LS: So commissary is a place where a lot of the men would hang out?

BS: Hang out and get paid off. Some of them came some drank and the hour grind together, you know?

LS: Did they sell? Did they sell whiskey in the commissary or...?

BS: No, no, no.

LS: Where'd they get the whiskey or the alcohol?

BS: They would all get it at the combatants store and they would have some.

LS: What about moonshine? Did anybody do they get moonshine for their whiskey?

BS: That when the world kind of Moonshine kinda moved and I know they would have Whiskey. And then propably some of them would have Moonshine. I knew uh sometime my daddy used to make what he called his pup. All I know they put syrup in it, corn in it, who knows what else, but that was just stuff at home. But I knew that was all the stuffed alcohol we used to sip on it and put more water in on it like, you know. We didnt use that other stuff like others.

LS: So anything else you want to add that you remember that I didn't ask you? Any other...?

BS: Cant think of anything right now.

LS: So do you think it was a good place to grow up?

BS: Well yeah, stillwater was propably the best. Not as good as Homerville but...one of the two best places I know. To grow up.

LS: Okay, well I want to thank you, Miss Bessie.

BS: Oh you're welcome

LS: I appreciate your taking the time here. I'm going to press the stop button now and

-End-