

Interview Report Date: - Oral Interview Date: August 28, 1998

Interview Location: Interviewee Home in Tifton, Georgia

List of acronyms: CW= Cynthia Waldrop, VW= Velma Louise Waldrop

Transcript by Hunter W. Norman

[Begin Transcription 0:00:28]

Cynthia Waldrop: Okay Grannie, when and where were you born?

Velma L. Waldrop: (inaudible), Alabama in 1926.

CW: Okay and were you raised there also?

VW: I lived in Alabama until I was 10 years old and then we moved to Georgia.

CW: And what was your mother and father's name?

VW: My father's name was William Clarence Lockhart. My mother's name was (Unintelligible)

CW: Okay and what did they do?

VW: They were farmers

Unintelligible [0:01:04 – 0:01:06]

CW: Alright we can start with what you remember about Alabama during the depression before you moved to Georgia.

VW: Well, there's a lot. I was young but I do remember a lot. It was certainly different from today. We had no electricity; no running water and the doors didn't even have door locks on them, they just had latches. I'm the oldest of two children. My daddy was just raised regular. On

cotton and corn, we had our cows and our house and our chickens. We grew our vegetables and butchered our own meat. We just lived at home we didn't have the markets to go to to buy groceries like we do now. There were no grocery stores, there was just small stores with dry stuff. They had no cold storage or cold vegetables then. [0:02:23-0:02:28] Unintelligible

CW: What kind of stuff did you get from the supply store?

VW: We got Unintelligible, flour, sugar, Unintelligible, dry peas and beans. We got kerosine from there. That's about the only store other than a clothing store that they had then. Something about stores that is unintelligible from [0:02:55- 0:03:10]

CW: I remember you telling me earlier about how you had to warm the water on a stove.

VW: We had an iron tub that would hold about a gallon of water. You would put it on top of the stove and we had a wood stove and you didn't need electricity for a wood stove. In the wintertime we had a fire in the fireplace all the time. We used it to warm our water too (Part of the audio for that sentence is really hard to understand.) We had to draw our water from the well with a bucket and then carry it inside. As the day was ending, part of the children's chores was to draw the water by the night, and you would have it for the next morning. We were happy and we enjoyed life and would go to church on Sundays. And at one time we had logs that we would warm by the fire to put somewhere(unintelligible) in the church to keep the children warm. We would go and spend the day at the church and get back before dark. In the wintertime daddy spent most of that time (unintelligible). [0:05:00] And just made preparations for crops during the spring. We usually planted corn first and then we would plant cotton. We always had a garden and plenty of vegetables. We'd have turnip greens and collards year around. Because in Alabama you could grow them year around. We had plenty to eat and any extra we had left we

always canned it. We made pickles, jellies and jams. We just had a good time. The children helped with the work more then than they do now because there wasn't a community or class for us to go to then. We just enjoyed working and helping with it.

CW: What were your chores?

VW: My chores was ever since I was 6 years old was to get up and fix the bacon and sausage in the morning. Since I was 6 years old, I would milk the cows each morning and every night.

Unintelligible statement [0:06:39 –0:06:45]. Daddy always fed the mules, he never let the children do that. He always took care of his mules. Then on washday we'd have to get out tubs and draw water and fill the tubs with water to wash and we had wash boards that we washed our things with. About twice a year mother would make soap and that what's we used to wash the clothes with. We'd scrub the floors, and that kind of soap made the floors real pretty and clean and white. But with washing we had a washcloth that we used on white clothes and real dirty work clothes. And we'd wash them and rinse them and throw them on the line. About twice a week we would do that.

CW: Y'all also made the soap (last part of statement is unintelligible)

VW: Yes, we always saved the fat from the meat and the pot ash. And we mixed the fat and (something about strips of something). We'd boil it and it would break it down where I don't remember just how mama could tell but it would jell. And it would jell just right, and we'd pour it in a box and let it cool. Then we'd cut it into square bars, just like what you buy now little square bars, and we'd wrap it in paper sacks. We didn't have wax paper. After a certain age unintelligible I remember wax paper coming out. We'd just have to use clean cloths and things like that to wrap the soap.

CW: Was that soap strong enough to wash your body with?

VW: No, you'd always wash your face with the unintelligible type of soap (I think she may have said ivory soap) and complexion soap to wash your face with. Daddy always had a cane patch, sweet potato patch, potatoes. We'd always put the potatoes in unintelligible and we'd have potatoes all winter long. Unintelligible would cut them and grind them. Usually there was one grinder in a community. [0:10:00] Each one would have their day to cut it and grind it and cook their stuff. [0:10:06 – 0:10:11] = Unintelligible.

CW: Did your dad work the farm for somebody else or?

VW: Yes, we always unintelligible (Something about her dad and share cropping)

Summary of next statement by VW because it's very hard to understand what she is saying: The sharecropper would finish the fertilizer and the mules, and her dad would divide the work up with another person.

CW: Did y'all help him farm?

VW: Well, there were four girls before there was a boy, so I had to work like a boy too. I helped daddy until he found a son old enough. My sister had a young one that would help some. Because she didn't like field work like I do. I enjoy field work, I always liked to go to the field and daddy would run something (unintelligible) and I would run the (unintelligible) right behind him. I'd make as many steps each day as he did. It was hard work.

CW: You told me that your mom didn't go to town much like you do now.

VW: Mama might go to town once or twice a year. She always stayed home with the small children because we had to go in the wagon, and we hooked two mules to it. We'd leave in the

morning and get back at about two or three o'clock in the afternoon. Going to town was the best time. Behind the stores they had what you call a hitching wagon, we tied the mules to that. Then we would go to the stores to get what we had to buy. We went in the grocery store and then to the unintelligible store. Daddy always loved banana pudding the most. He'd always bought vanilla wafers ever since they started making them. He'd always buy a box of vanilla wafers and some bananas. And we knew what we were gonna have for supper that night which was banana pudding and we enjoyed that. My daddy was a very small man and mama was a larger bone person. We just had a good life, all of us enjoyed it.

CW: You told me about the work program called the WPA.

VW: Yes, this would be young men mostly that didn't have a job and wanted to make a little bit of money which was just pennies then. The WPA would build roads and communities and fix bridges that needed repair. Then it was mostly (unintelligible) When I was first born they had very few sawmills. So, they got more sawmills that they would use to flatten and cut up the wood to build the bridges with. They used to make the bridges with the logs. They'd just lay them close together and just bump, bump, bump going over them.

CW: They would use the trees that they cut down?

VW: They cut the trees and they had prospect saws then. It'd take two men to saw. And that's where we would get our firewood for our stove and wood for our fireplace in the wintertime. We had to have stove wood year around. (Next statement is unintelligible but it was something about cooking.) The wells all had what we call a curving (unintelligible) around them. They'd dig the well and then they would dig a square well and two men would go down in and dig the dirt up and put it in a bucket. They would pull the bucket up and pour it out. They'd dig deep enough

until they got water. And that's how we got our water. [0:15:00] We had no running water or electricity. We didn't get electricity until after we move to Georgia.

CW: Tell me about when you moved to Georgia. (That sounds like what she said but very hard to understand.)

VW: In January of 1937, I had an aunt and uncle, my mama's sister and her husband had moved from Alabama to Georgia (unintelligible something about and job and running water) And they worked on a farm. One of my daddy's uncles had a two-ton truck with wood bodies on it and we put our furniture and all that we had. That two-ton had it all packed on there. And right in the back of the truck they stacked the mattresses, the double bed mattresses. There was five children, so when we moved to Georgia there was five children and we all sat on that mattress all the way from Alabama to Georgia. The best that I can remember was that we left early one morning, and it was night when we go here. We left before daylight one morning and we rode all day. It didn't rain so we had a good trip from Alabama to Georgia. We moved up into a two-room house that had what you call a breezeway. It had shelving in the kitchen and mama and daddy, and the five children lived in that house. We had no electricity, but it was a good house and we lived there two or three years. Daddy just worked with Mr. Clay Rainwater, and he rented our crops (rest of the statement is unintelligible other than something about sharecropping [0:17:24]) But he worked in the peanuts (unintelligible something about pecan trees)

CW: How was school then?

VW: Well school, we rode a school bus. The schools in Alabama and Georgia were practically similar. You didn't start school back then until you were six years old, you had to be six to start to school. We'd get up each morning and pack our lunch. Back then you had to carry your lunch

because they had no lunchrooms in the schools. We'd pack our lunch and go to school. We were always hungry when we came home from school. Mama always had a snack waiting on us and that was a fun time. We just had one grade in each room when I first started to school but when we moved to Georgia a lot of the schools had two grades in them. We went to school everyday and enjoyed it.

CW: What subjects did you study?

VW: Well, I just got to the seventh grade, so I had spelling, math and we called it arithmetic then, and English and geography. Sixth graders studied health.

CW: What about church?

VW: Well in Alabama we went to a Baptist Church and when we moved to Georgia we went to a Missionary Baptist. We lived close enough to Pine Hill Church that we could walk. [0:20:00] We'd just get up and get ready. Mama usually had a little baby asleep. Mama used to carry our little baby. When all the children got ready we went to church. We enjoyed it, going to church and school.

CW: What was (unintelligible)

VW: Over in Georgia?

CW: Mhmm

VW: Let's see I was trying to remember when we got electricity, but I don't remember what year it was when we got electricity. But I know I was twelve or thirteen years old when we got it. It was just one light in each room. (A statement about radios that is unintelligible.) It was several

years before we got a phone. When we got electricity then come the heat and the water and all of that. That was a blessing.

CW: What was the first thing you did every morning?

VW: When I'd get up in the morning, I'd always fix breakfast. I still do that. I enjoy it and I enjoy my cooking. I didn't have an electric sewing machine until I got married. I wish I had one before I got married because I always had the chore to sew. (Part of last sentence is summarized because it is very hard to understand.) It was just much easier and a more comfortable life.

CW: Did you sew most of your clothes at home?

VW: I used to for about all of it. Most of the stuff you could find in the stores were winter clothes. Most people wanted summer clothes. Most people wanted to buy knit clothes. In the wintertime we always made homemade quilts. Both of our grandbabies on mama and daddy's side, both of them loved to quilt.

CW: Do you remember what kind of clothes men would wear to church?

VW: They would always wear dark dress pants to church. They had no khakis back then and not all the men wore ties, but they always wore coats. They had dress coats and dress pants, but they didn't wear as many ties. Now the older men would usually wear a tie. The women then would wear silk stockings with their dress. Even toys then we didn't have toys. You couldn't go to a store and buy toys. You could buy (unintelligible) or something like that. We always just made tops and my daddy would always take (unintelligible, something about wooden tops.) He would take his pocketknife and make tops. He'd make different designs and different colors and we'd play tops. We'd make wheels and you'd take a wheel and a wood block, and he would take his

knife a make it look like a car. The children would play with them like that. And dolls they near about always had dolls. [0:25:00] Ragdoll they called it or a stuffed doll (unintelligible)

CW: What were the holidays like?

VW: They were enjoyable, we always had a feast and families most of the time would get together.

CW: Unintelligible question

VW: We always went to (unintelligible). And in the summer on the fourth of July, we always had family come over and spend the whole day. We had these baskets to carry our food and dishes in. We had a towel, and we'd cover it with a towel and pack it in a box. We'd drive several miles to (rest of statement is unintelligible.)

CW: You told me that you milked the cows (the rest of the statement is unintelligible.)

VW: We got the milk, and you always strained it and put it in a churn. And you'd put just a little bit of left over buttermilk in it and make it (unintelligible) they called it. You'd put (something unintelligible) and churn it for about twenty to twenty-five minutes. And the butter would float to the top then and my daddy loved that fresh butter. He'd get up and churn while mama and me and the rest of us was doing other things around the house. He'd always get up and churn. He liked his fresh butter and his biscuits.

CW: What did your brothers and sisters do for fun?

VW: Well, we always had balls, and marbles. You would make a bat out of a stick. We always had balls and marbles and wagons to play in. The boys would always play ball and marbles. And we would play with dolls and things like that.

CW: Was your house in Georgia the one with breezeway?

VW: Yes, that's the one we moved into when we came from Alabama to Georgia.

CW: How many beds did it have?

VW: We had one bedroom, a kitchen and then a leased-out room. And all the young ones were living out of two double beds. And in the corner of the kitchen, we had a (unintelligible). And in that little side-room we had (unintelligible).

CW: And how many of y'all had to sleep in there?

VW: Well, there was five children when mama and daddy moved from Alabama. And then (someone was born but the name is unintelligible) then Carolyn (the rest of the statement is unintelligible due to the mumbling)

CW: Was the kitchen (unintelligible)

VW: Well, the breezeway, unintelligible, kitchen and the other room. (The next statement is something about a porch, but I can't make it out.) In the summertime it made it cooler, and, in the wintertime, it made it cooler too so.

CW: How did y'all keep warm at night?

VW: [0:30:00] We just put quilts on and two or three are sleeping the bed and with the quilts we stayed warm. Daddy would always get up and start a fire in the fireplace and jump back in the bed. And when the fire got started it made the room warm. I guess so many of us in the house and all it just kept it warm, and we wore jackets too.

CW: In the summer did y'all go swimming?

VW: All the men usually went swimming and the boys would go and find a river or something to go swimming in. Women didn't go swimming much then. The first few years I was (unintelligible)

CW: What were the styles of clothes and shoes?

VW: All the men and boys wore overalls to work in. They wore them to school. Women usually just wore a plain dress with a collar. They'd decorate them and (unintelligible) We had a wardrobe of them. Mama had a sewing machine. (Unintelligible statement) Mama didn't do much sewing on it. (Unintelligible statement the only word I could make out was curtains.) Then they did come out with a sheet. Mama made a bedspread.

CW: What kind of stove did y'all have at the time?

VW: A wood stove, a lot of them had what you call (unintelligible) on the side that you could put water in and we'd have warm water. We had four irons, and we knew how to iron. You had to be careful when you're baking a cake and not get too hot.

CW: Did y'all have an outhouse?

VW: It was outside. See we didn't have a bathtub then we had to use our washtubs to clean in. In the summertime we would take the clothes and set them out in the sun and dry them. And put water in the tubs let them set in the sun. Because the water was cool from the (unintelligible) And that night we'd have warm water to take baths. We'd have the tubs lined up, four or five tubs and we'd draw from the water.

CW: Unintelligible question but it was something about the water.

VW: A few times but the water level then was higher than it is now. Used to they didn't have to dig real deep to have a well. I remember when they ran dry. You'd get rid of unintelligible sometimes. Next statement is unintelligible. [0:34:31]

CW: How often did you make new dresses or shoes?

VW: We would always try to have an Easter dress. I guess that's what that was started around was for a new dress for Easter. [0:35:00] Then we would get unintelligible while we could. Shoes they used a different style all of them used to buckle and button. Back then we had to put elastic inserts in them. (Statement about heels but the rest of it is unintelligible.) Some of them were nice to have and some of them weren't.

CW: You said something about Easter breakfast. Do you remember what y'all did for the Easter Bunny or Santa Claus?

VW: Well now Santa Claus always come (unintelligible) We got unintelligible and some candy and we always looked forward to that.

CW: Did y'all put up a Christmas tree?

VW: No not for several years. They'd cut us any kind of tree and we'd make decorations.

CW: What did you make them out of?

VW: We'd take construction paper or either take paper and just cut it and glue it together. And make a chain. We'd make popcorn, a string of popcorn. And things like that, that style. We'd color the paper and put it on the tree.

CW: Well Grannie I really appreciate talking to you.

VW: I've enjoyed it.

CW: This has helped me learn a lot more (the rest of statement is unintelligible)

VW: Well, I hope I have been able to help.

CW: I very much appreciate it.

[End of transcription [0:37:20]