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Rev. Lessie Butler

Interviewee

Rt. 1 Box 131

Silver Creek Miss.

Address

Priscilla P. Johansen

Director

Lincoln-Lawrence-Franklin
Regional Library

Sept. 7, 1978

Date of Agreement

Subject of Tape(s)

Lincoln-Lawrence-Franklin Regional Library
Oral History
Data Sheet

FULL NAME Lessie Senior Butler
ADDRESS Rt. 1, Box 131, Silver Creek, MS PHONE 886-7033
BIRTHPLACE Lawrence County, MS DATE OF BIRTH April 17, 1908
EDUCATION Bridges School; Pin Oak School; Attended school eleven (11) years.

OCCUPATION Farmer; preacher

TRAVELS

SPOUSE'S FULL NAME _____
BIRTHPLACE _____ DATE OF BIRTH 1910
OCCUPATION _____

NUMBER OF CHILDREN Two (2) - also raised a girl

NAMES OF CHILDREN

Clifford Butler

Lessie James Butler

FATHER'S FULL NAME Preston Butler
BIRTHPLACE Lawrence County, MS DATE OF BIRTH April 10, 1886
OCCUPATION Public work; farmer
MOTHER'S FULL NAME Clara Price
BIRTHPLACE Lawrence County, MS DATE OF BIRTH 1885
OCCUPATION Housewife

MAJOR NATIONAL AND/OR LOCAL EVENTS OF IMPORTANCE DISCUSSED

INTERVIEWEE'S AREA OF INTEREST AND/OR CONTRIBUTION TO THE COMMUNITY

The Black community in Lawrence County, MS; school games; celebrations; mother's wages; Black churches; Funerals, wakes, body preparation, etc.; The 1929 Depression; Slavery; Ku Klux Klan; Sample sermon and hymn.

His home Rt. 1, Silver Creek, MS July 27, 1977 Evelyn Benham
PLACE OF INTERVIEW DATE INTERVIEWER

Lessie Senior Butler
INTERVIEWEE'S NAME

An Interview with
Rev. Lessie Senior Butler
July 27, 1977

Interviewed by
Evelyn Benham

Mississippi
Department of Archives and History
and the
Lincoln-Lawrence-Franklin Regional Library
Oral History Project
Monticello and Vicinity

BENHAM: This is an interview with Lessie Senior Butler, Route 1, Box 131, Silver Creek, Mississippi, July 27, 1977. Interviewed by Evelyn Benham. Rev. Butler, what is your full name?

BUTLER: Lessie Senior Butler.

BENHAM: When were you born?

BUTLER: I was born April the 17th, 1908.

BENHAM: Where were you born?

BUTLER: I was born in Lawrence County.

BENHAM: Where did you grow up?

BUTLER: I grew up right here in Lawrence County. Grew up here in Lawrence County.

BENHAM: How old were you when you first started school?

BUTLER: Six (6) years old.

BENHAM: Will you tell me something about your first school? What was the name of it and where was it located?

BUTLER: Bridges School and it was located right up here in Rosehill and it was named Bridges School.

BENHAM: Did a lot of children go to school when you went?

BUTLER: Yes, ma'am, lots of children going to school and also, after I went to school here, my mother and father moved out to his home and I went to that school over there that they call Pin Oak School and Mrs. Rosie Cole was teaching school over there.

BENHAM: Where is this Pin Hill School?

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BUTLER: It's over there on Eighty-four (84), just about a mile from Silver Creek going towards Monticello.

BENHAM: I see, all right. Did you have recess at school?

BUTLER: Yes, ma'am. We had, you might say, three (3) period recess. We had one in the morning and one at dinner and then one in the evening before time to turn out.

BENHAM: All right. What kind of games did you play at this time?

BUTLER: We were playing then at that time. We had what we called "paddle ball" and played that paddle ball and then we have a circle playing going around dropping handkerchiefs and called it "merry-go-round." And then we all had a little flying gin that we all would swing on. This flying gin was made with a post set in the ground and a pole with a hole bored in it and that hole came up through that pole and it just went around and around in a circle and so many would get on it and ride it and it would swing them around.

BENHAM: What did they swing on? Was it made with a rope or chain or what?

BUTLER: No, it was just a pole laid across and just enough get on it to keep it balanced. Enough on one end of it and enough on the other to keep it balanced and then we'd just go around on it.

BENHAM: You see, you have to describe it in detail so that the tape can pick it up. If you tell me with your hands that doesn't mean anything because the tape can't pick it up, you know.

BUTLER: Yes, that's right. Well, this post was set firm in the ground and then this hole was bore midway of that pole that set on that post.

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BENHAM: Oh, I see. How long was the pole that went across?

BUTLER: The pole would be about, I imagine the pole would be about fifteen (15) feet long and that would give about eight (8) feet on each end of the pole.

BENHAM: Yes, yes.

BUTLER: And then enough would get on that pole to keep it balanced.

BENHAM: Oh, yes.

BUTLER: Where the pole would lay level.

BENHAM: Oh, I see, right.

BUTLER: Yes, ma'am.

BENHAM: Well, what did the children hold on to?

BUTLER: Oh, they just held on to the pole.

BENHAM: Oh, they held on to the pole.

BUTLER: Yes, ma'am.

BENHAM: I don't understand. You mean there was a pole at each end of this fifteen (15) foot pole?

BUTLER: No, ma'am; no, ma'am. They would ride that pole. They'd get up on that pole and ride it, I'd say like a monkey.

BENHAM: Oh, like a monkey.

BUTLER: Just hold up on it, you know, just straddle the pole. Just straddle the pole and then ride around.

BENHAM: Oh, my goodness.

BUTLER: You know, the small ones would hold on, but the large ones, children, they'd just get up there and sit down and let their feet hang down like riding a horse.

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BENHAM: I've never heard of that before, but that must have been lots of fun, wasn't it?

BUTLER: Yes, ma'am, that was lots of fun.

BENHAM: How far did you live from school?

BUTLER: At that time I was living about three (3) miles.

BENHAM: Well, how did you get to the school?

BUTLER: We walked; we walked.

BENHAM: You walked there and you walked back?

BUTLER: Yes, ma'am.

BENHAM: Were you ever kept in at recess because you didn't get your homework up?

BUTLER: Oh my, because I didn't get my lessons.

BENHAM: Yes, right or because you were mischievous or something or playing around with somebody and got into trouble?

BUTLER: Well, somehow or other, I thank the Lord, I never was so bad about getting into trouble. I always tried to be a humble boy and the only thing that I would get punished for would be mostly that some part of my lesson I couldn't understand and they were helping me and I didn't know it, but I stayed in.

BENHAM: Yes, you stayed in all right. What holidays were celebrated when you were a child?

BUTLER: Well, the only day that I can remember celebrating was the Fourth of July. I can't ever forget that. That was the day we always tried to get the biggest part of our work over with by the Fourth of July. And then, Christmas Day. I always was ready for that day.

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BENHAM: Yes.

BUTLER: And those were the two (2) main days that I can remember celebrating. After I got older, I learned, you know, more holidays.

BENHAM: Yes. Well, how did you celebrate? You say you will always remember the Fourth of July. What was so outstanding about that?

BUTLER: Well, they would play baseball at a place and we'd go there and we'd have ice cream and we'd get a chance to get ice cream and watch them play ball. I never did play ball much, but I just loved to see them play ball. So then they'd have that ice cream there and I like that.

BENHAM: Oh, I know it. I still like it. And that was the old homemade ice cream too, wasn't it?

BUTLER: Yes, ma'am, homemade, that's right, by hand.

BENHAM: And everybody I guess took a turn.

BUTLER: That's right.

BENHAM: At what? With the wheel.

BUTLER: Yes, ma'am.

BENHAM: With the wheel,

BUTLER: Handle turning.

BENHAM: Yes, the handle of the wheel turning. And how did you celebrate Christmas?

BUTLER: Well, Christmas now, what I was always glad of was Santa Claus. And I would always hang up my stocking and couldn't hardly sleep waiting for Santa Claus to come. And get up early that next morning and see that he'd put me some candy, apples, and firecrackers. That was mostly what I admired then was the firecrackers.

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BENHAM: Yes, yes.

BUTLER: And get out there and --. I sure would hate for a Christmas Day to come on a Sunday, because they wouldn't let us shoot the firecrackers that Sunday.

BENHAM: Yes, I know. I can remember all of my Christmases too, you know, certain ones that stand out in my memory. How long did you go to school, Rev. Butler?

BUTLER: Let's see, I went to school, let's see, I started at six (6) and quit at seventeen (17). Eleven (11) years.

BENHAM: Back then, how long was the school? How long did the children go to school?

BUTLER: Well, six-and-a-half (6½) or seven (7) months, something like that.

BENHAM: And then what happened?

BUTLER: Well, you just went home then. You see, school would start, I believe, sometime in October. I think it was in October and then it would run on until about the first of March. And so we were out then for making a crop.

BENHAM: Oh, I see.

BUTLER: And then we'd start our crop.

BENHAM: And that was reason why they closed the school?

BUTLER: No, ma'am. They said the money, you know, was short. They didn't have long term school like they're having now.

BENHAM: I see. I understand.

BUTLER: And long then, it was, I call it, tight times.

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BENHAM: Yes.

BUTLER: So we had to buy all our books and lots of times didn't have the money to buy the books with. Not money to buy the clothes to go to school. That would make us miss a whole lot of days by not having clothes to change to go to school like we desired to. Like we wanted to do.

BENHAM: Yes.

BUTLER: And so we worked on. And I can remember that I would get out and try to work a little and help Mamma out. Her and my father were separated at that time and so she had to be the husband and the wife. And there wasn't no work to do but you know, a little housework for a woman to go and wash clothes, cook, and wait upon somebody that had a sick wife until she got better, something like that, a wife in, laying in. And I can remember that Mamma was working and I went up there, the man she was working for, I wanted to go to school, I think she was getting a dollar and a half a week. She worked a whole week for a dollar and a half. And I bought me a book and it cost a dollar and a half. She had to work a whole week to get me one (1) book. And it was called "geography."

BENHAM: What was it called?

BUTLER: Geography, that's what we called it.

BENHAM: Geography, it could be, I don't know.

BUTLER: But somehow or another I was pretty apt in spelling. And the children I went to school with, nine times out of ten, those that were, you know, more fortunate, they wouldn't let us have their book to study. Sometimes they'd let us study and sometimes they wouldn't. But I would take advantage of it sometimes when at recess I'd slip back in there and get their

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book and study. And by so doing, I stood second to none in spelling.

BENHAM: Wonderful. That is really wonderful. It's remarkable. You were just determined that you were going to get it.

BUTLER: Oh, yes.

BENHAM: Well, look what you did. See, you did do it.

BUTLER: Oh, I learned how to spell some things and so I thank the Lord that He, you know, gave me that gift. That I could catch on to some things pretty fast.

BENHAM: That's right.

BUTLER: I'm getting old now. I can't remember much very long.

BENHAM: You're not old. Look at some people, they're ninety (90) years old.

BUTLER: That's right. That's how old my mamma is. She's ninety-two (92).
Yes.

BENHAM: That's wonderful.

BUTLER: Still waiting on herself; staying by herself.

BENHAM: As long as they can do that.

BUTLER: They're better satisfied.

BENHAM: They are better satisfied, Because you know, they know where everything is and if you. I used to do a lot of worrying about my mother, but you know, really it's not unkind to let them alone.

BUTLER: No, no.

BENHAM: Because if you can drop in on them and let them stay in their house if they have a home, then they are happy. And even if they just die there like that, then they are happy.

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BUTLER: Oh, yes, that's right.

BENHAM: And if you get them all upset and move them, it's just like going out there and pulling up one of those big trees.

BUTLER: That's right,

BENHAM: And moving it.

BUTLER: Somewhere else.

BENHAM: And expecting it to go on living, because a lot of times it dies, you know.

BUTLER: That's right.

BENHAM: Now what is your father's full name?

BUTLER: Preston Butler. Preston Butler.

BENHAM: When was he born?

BUTLER: He was born April the 10th, 1886.

BENHAM: And where was he born?

BUTLER: He was born in Lawrence County.

BENHAM: What kind of work did your father do?

BUTLER: Well, he mostly public worked and farmed some. In his younger days he public worked, but in the older days he wound up farming until he, you know, retired. So he has been dead now several years.

BENHAM: What crops did your father grow?

BUTLER: Corn and cotton mostly, Corn and cotton and a few watermelons. He loved watermelons. He could grow nice watermelons too. But that was his major crop, those three (3).

BENHAM: Well, what kind of animals did he have on the farm?

BUTLER: Well, he was working on halves, living on halves.

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BENHAM: On what?

BUTLER: Living on halves. On the white man's place.

BENHAM: Oh, I see, I see.

BUTLER: He was a share-cropper.

BENHAM: He was a share-cropper. I see, what kind of animals did they have there?

BUTLER: Mules, horses to plow.

BENHAM: What is your mother's maiden name?

BUTLER: Price.

BENHAM: Her whole name.

BUTLER: Clara Price.

BENHAM: Clara Price. When was she born?

BUTLER: She was born in 1885.

BENHAM: And where was she born?

BUTLER: She was born in Lawrence County.

BENHAM: And you said that your mother worked away from home doing odd jobs for people, didn't you?

BUTLER: Yes, ma'am.

BENHAM: All right. How did you become interested in being a preacher?

BUTLER: Well, we were having prayer meeting out there on where we were living at and I had seen so many people ignoring what the preacher was preaching about. And I began to read the Bible and reading it, I had the desire to do something for the Lord and so from that He just put a zeal and a burning in my heart for the work for the Lord.

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BENHAM: It's beautiful. Did you do any other kind of work or job or work at anything else before you decided to become a preacher?

BUTLER: No more than just farm work.

BENHAM: Well, how old were you when you got this desire to serve God?

BUTLER: Well, along about, I was about thirty-five (35) years old. And I've run a long time, a few years, and didn't give up, you know; just said maybe that isn't your calling. I can do something else. I can work in the church or I can sing in the choir or I can lead the prayer meeting or something like that kind. That wasn't it.

BENHAM: Well, what did you do to prepare yourself to become a preacher?

BUTLER: Well, these things that I had done were to pray to the Lord to give me understanding - how to understand, you know, some of the words that He would have me to say. After I didn't get a chance to go to school like I desire, and at that time we didn't have no good teachers, that's what I have to say. Because they didn't teach me no English, so you will have to excuse my language.

BENHAM: Well, that's all right, that's all right. I am not even thinking about that. I am trying to look at the man that is inside. I am not even looking on the outside.

BUTLER: And I didn't learn English and so I didn't learn, you know, the parts of speech. Now they didn't teach us nothing of that.

BENHAM: I see.

BUTLER: You know after the children, we raised a girl and so we tried to send her to school and she didn't want it much and didn't take it. But she taught me some things by listening to her, you know. Because she was

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telling about the eight (8) parts of speech. Well, I didn't know that speech had any different parts to it. You know, such as interrogative, imperative, and explanatory, and something or other. If you know.

BENHAM: Yes.

BUTLER: And out of those eight (8) parts of speech, verbs, adverbs, adjectives, and so forth.

BENHAM: Nouns and pronouns.

BUTLER: I finally learned what a noun was.

BENHAM: Well, if you know just a few basic thing, I think you can make it through all right.

BUTLER: Yes, ma'am.

BENHAM: Well, did you have to go to a seminary or something like that?

BUTLER: No, ma'am. I didn't go. They had one going, but at that time I had just bought my home here and didn't have any money and so I had to pay it, you know, by note. And I didn't see where I was able to go to school and take care of the notes and so I didn't go to school. I just studied the best I could.

BENHAM: What are your specific duties as a preacher?

BUTLER: Well, mostly preach missionary sermons for the associations, and the institutes and then the Sunday School and also tend the funerals - such as that - and marry people that want to get married.

BENHAM: Yes. I am going to ask you some more about that anyway in just a little bit. When did you meet your future wife?

BUTLER: Let's see now, I met her in - 1926 when we got married, yes, ma'am, 1926 - but the first meeting that you need to know of was along about

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1919 or 1918. Anyhow when the war was going on. My daddy carried me out in that section and I saw her then as a small girl. There were three (3) of the children there. They were playing. But I didn't think that was going to be my wife then. So we finally moved out in that direction and somehow or another the Lord gave her to me.

BENHAM: Yes, she looks like a marvelous person.

BUTLER: Yes, I think she is. Yes, ma'am.

BENHAM: Well now, when was your wife born?

BUTLER: Now, I believe she told me she was born in 1910.

BENHAM: And where was she born?

BUTLER: She doesn't exactly know where she was born.

BENHAM: Well, was she born in this county?

BUTLER: I just don't know. I never heard Mother say whether she was born in this county or not.

BENHAM: All right, that's all right. How many children did you and your wife have?

BUTLER: Two (2) boys.

BENHAM: Two (2) boys. Well, will you give me their first and middle names?

BUTLER: The first one is Clifford Butler.

BENHAM: All right, Clifford Butler. And which is the next one?

BUTLER: The next one is Lessie James Butler.

BENHAM: All right. How did you go about getting a church to preach in?

BUTLER: Well, the people just, you know, would, the people would call. I would go, you know, to various places, various churches and being there,

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the people would ask if there was anything to say. In that way people came to know me and some that heard what I had to say, and they'd call and give an appointment to come to preach.

BENHAM: I see. Well, did someone have to recommend you in church to want you to come to that church?

BUTLER: Oh no, no, no, ma'am. I'd just go. Just loved to go.

BENHAM: I see. And then how did you finally get to be the minister of your church? Do you have a church now?

BUTLER: No, ma'am. I don't have a church.

BENHAM: Oh, you're still doing the same thing.

BUTLER: Evangelism work, yes.

BENHAM: Oh, this is called evangelism?

BUTLER: Yes, evangelism.

BENHAM: Preaching. Do you just go to different churches and preach?

BUTLER: Yes, ma'am. You know, if they call lots of times they'll give you appointments, want you to come and carry out a service.

BENHAM: Oh, yes, yes. I see. Well, how many people were in the churches when you went there? Were there a lot of people that went to church at that time?

BUTLER: Well, yes, a good crowd of people went there.

BENHAM: Do you think they went there more than they do today?

BUTLER: It seem to me like they were more interested than they are today. Yes, ma'am, you know, for service. Most of the crowd goes there to see who is there. See who he can see. And who can put on the best clothes. Who can dress the best, look the best. But then you could hear

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them singing in the church and something would just make you feel like you weren't getting there fast enough. And you would walk in the church. But now, you got the car right in the garage and you're hardly ever on time.

BENHAM: That's right, we've put everything else in front of God, haven't we?

BUTLER: Yes.

BENHAM: What is the history of your church? I mean, say like the history of this Rosehill Church? Do you know the history about it?

BUTLER: No, ma'am. I don't know too much about it, only it was organized in 1907 by Rev. Augustus Brown. And it has had its ups and downs and still been existing and still standing and still going on.

BENHAM: That's a very unusual structure, the way it is constructed.

BUTLER: That's right.

BENHAM: That's been standing from 1907?

BUTLER: No, ma'am. That's the spot of ground.

BENHAM: Oh, I see. Was there a church there before this one was put up?

BUTLER: Oh, yes, ma'am, yes, ma'am. They had a church there before this one. They had an old wooden church there.

BENHAM: Was it built something like this one is built?

BUTLER: No, ma'am, not quite, no, ma'am. It was, you might say, just a barn roof shape. Then they finally put belting on it. They call it, I call it a steeple, you know.

BENHAM: Oh yes. What do you mean like a barn?

BUTLER: Like a barn is just straight. You see there's no offset to it

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or anything. Just a door in front, I think it had double doors in the front and then a door on each side after you get in it.

BENHAM: Well, was the roof peaked or was it flat or what?

BUTLER: No, it was a cone roof.

BENHAM: I see. Did you ever get up there and say put somebody out of the church because they had done, broken one of God's commandments, or gone astray or something like that?

BUTLER: No, ma'am. I never did do that.

BENHAM: All right, how do you go about preparing a sermon?

BUTLER: Well, just study and consecrate your soul, from that angle and start talking.

BENHAM: I see. Well, do you have notes that you take up there with you?

BUTLER: Sometimes I do and then most of the time I get the notes up there and get started talking and I can't see what I have on the notes.

BENHAM: Then you really are just talking right out in your own way, isn't it?

BUTLER: Yes, that's right, that's right.

BENHAM: What is a wake?

BUTLER: A wake?

BENHAM: What is a wake? Like, you know, when someone dies and they have a wake. What is a wake?

BUTLER: A wake. Well, to tell you the truth now, I have never all together figured that out. I just call it sitting there, sort of consoling the family, the bereaved family. Now, we call it sitting up at the wake

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tonight. But we are sitting up with the dead.

BENHAM: Sure, that's right.

BUTLER: So I just put a bridge over that and go on just like they got it. Just like I came to the knowledge of it the first time. Like I came in the knowledge of the wake the first time.

BENHAM: Just like you did what?

BUTLER: Like I came in the knowledge of the wake the first time.

BENHAM: Oh, the knowledge?

BUTLER: The knowledge. That's what they told me the first time, you know. "We're going on a wake tonight. We're going to wake brother so-and-so." Well, he was already dead and I didn't see how they could wake him.

BENHAM: Oh, yes. I understand what you meant.

BUTLER: So, but I said it was sitting up with the wake. There were folks there, you know, that were sitting there at the wake. But you were either sitting up with the wake or sitting up with the dead.

BENHAM: Well, you know, I have never thought about that. Wake. I wonder where that word "wake" came from?

BUTLER: That's what I could never map out.

BENHAM: Well, I'm going to check on that myself when I get back to the library. Did the people in your church ever have any superstitions about graveyards or cemeteries?

BUTLER: No, ma'am. If they did, I never heard of any complain. No more than some there if anybody died in the community and was buried at that church; if they were sleeping by themselves, they had to sleep with somebody else the next night.

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BENHAM: No. I don't understand that. How do you mean by that?

BUTLER: You know they would be afraid. Like somebody'd die in the community you know or in the family, well, when that person died, then they get scared some way or another, afraid.

BENHAM: You mean afraid in the home?

BUTLER: Just afraid in the home. Just afraid of the dead person.

BENHAM: Oh, you mean if the dead person was there in the home they would be afraid?

BUTLER: Yes. They would be afraid if he was there and then sometimes they wouldn't have to be in the home.

BENHAM: I see.

BUTLER: Just be in the community and when the funeral would be and they buried that person then they'd be afraid.

BENHAM: Yes, I think maybe I could understand that, don't you?

BUTLER: Well, I don't know. But he ain't coming back.

BENHAM: No, no, I know they're not coming back, but you know when you've lived with someone, say your husband or your wife and your child and then suddenly the child is no more there, then you become frightened because you are alone.

BUTLER: Alone.

BENHAM: You know, that's when people stay with you for awhile, your children or something, and that sort of thing. Did you ever charge for a funeral?

BUTLER: No, ma'am.

BENHAM: Do ministers charge today?

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BUTLER: Some of them do, yes, ma'am. I knew one preacher one time, an old person too, and she had a son to die and she got him to attend to his funeral and she offered him five (5) dollars and he told her that wasn't any money, give him twenty-five (25) dollars. Just to attend to the funeral. But it hurt him, it hurt him all up the road, because there were too many people there knew her condition. If she had to send a long ways after, that would have looked different, you know. For instance, you couldn't have come over here for nothing, but if I was at your place up there where you live, you see, you could come with less expense is what I am trying to say.

BENHAM: I see, yes.

BUTLER: So you see, he didn't have any big expense.

BENHAM: I see.

BUTLER: And so that is why he lost friendship by charging that poor widow woman.

BENHAM: Yes.

BUTLER: That much money when five (5) dollars would have been a big price.

BENHAM: That's right, that's right. And for the little bit that he got, he really didn't get anything, did he, because as you say he lost out with his friends and that sort of thing.

BUTLER: That's right. And so if I go a distance, they will give me something. So lots of times they have offered me more than I would take and I'd say, no, that's enough. Just take care of my expense. Now just to get out and say, "No, I am not going to bury him without a certain amount of money," that won't be in my spirit. I hope it won't ever be.

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BENHAM: Yes. I don't think it will either. Not after talking with you this little while. I don't think you will be that way either. How are the ministers paid today?

BUTLER: Today?

BENHAM: Yes, how do ministers get paid anyway?

BUTLER: Most of them are on a standard salary, yes, ma'am.

BENHAM: And who does this? The church, the congregation itself pays them?

BUTLER: The congregation, yes, ma'am. In other words, they assessed the members with so much and they all bring that in and then out of that so much we pay this preacher. They have that money to pay him a standard salary. Then they have some left to put in the treasury.

BENHAM: I see. Well, how were preachers paid years and years ago?

BUTLER: Years and years ago they were paid only on merits; whatever the people gave the preacher, that's what he got. If you got a good collection, you got good pay and if it rained him out, he didn't get anything.

BENHAM: Right. That seems to be unfair though. They ought to have a little bit, even if it is a little bit that they can depend on.

BUTLER: That's what I say.

BENHAM: And you know, even if it is thirty (30) dollars a month was back then. But of course thirty (30) dollars fifty (50) years ago just - thirty (30) dollars was like thirty thousand (30,000) dollars and it bought a lot of things. You know, to know that you have a little bit that you can depend on means a lot more.

BUTLER: Means a lot more. I have worked for fifty (50) cents a day

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from sun to sun. From sun to sun, I worked for fifty (50) cents a day.

BENHAM: What year was this?

BUTLER: Oh, that was in 1933 and '34, along there.

BENHAM: Yes, that was right after the great Depression, wasn't it?

BUTLER: That's it exactly.

BENHAM: And people just hadn't even gotten on their feet yet. Lots of people went hungry.

BUTLER: They sure did.

BENHAM: Starved and died and everything. You know, you were talking a little bit about the first World War. How old were you? No, that's right, that was in 1916, no, 1914.

BUTLER: 1914. That was when I was four (4) years old.

BENHAM: Yes, you were only four (4). Did you ever hear your parents talk about that war much?

BUTLER: No, ma'am. I didn't hear them talk too much about that war. That was President Wilson's time, Woodrow Wilson. And they had a song out of it:

President Wilson's sitting on a throne
Making a law for everyone.
He didn't call the black and leave out the white
He wanted everybody to have an equal right.

All of them were going to the war then! And I never did hear them say too much about the war and that's how I got, my father living out in Jeff Davis County and he was trying to get us on his dependent slip you know, to help keep him out of the army. That's what I'm saying now. But anyhow, before he had to go, the war ceased. But he would have gone if the war had not ceased.

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BENHAM: Well, you said something about the Depression. Do you remember that?

BUTLER: In 1932?

BENHAM: The Depression?

BUTLER: Yes, ma'am.

BENHAM: Well, how did it affect you and your family and people around where you lived?

BUTLER: Well, it affected us pretty much in our eating, because they had a flour, I don't know, when you got the biscuits cooked, it was near about as dark as this book, is the flour. But you could get that, but that was the only kind of flour you could get. And they let you have a little sugar. But this, what we call bleached flour, we didn't get none of that. Not during that Depression, but after then they began to get better, you know, when President Roosevelt took office. When he took office and told them if they didn't put the money back in circulation, he was going to counterfeit everything. They put the money back in the bank and put it in circulation and after that, then the war broke out. And so then they had to make preparations to fight the war. And so it's been moving up a little bit ever since.

BENHAM: All right.

BUTLER: But back there in those days, it was tough times. You couldn't buy a job and couldn't find nobody that had one.

BENHAM: That's right. And there were people who had fabulour educations that just stood out there and waited for something to eat.

BUTLER: That's right.

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BENHAM: I know my husband said that - he came from up in Indiana - and he said when he got down here that he had to eat oatmeal three (3) times a day. I mean, that's what he had for breakfast, for lunch, and for supper. And he did that for month after month; that's how he made it.

BUTLER: Well, we were there with Grandmamma and she had a bunch of cows and so that was our biggest living. Milk and bread three (3) times a day.

BENHAM: Well, you made it though, didn't you?

BUTLER: And long there we grew lots of cane. And so we had milk and bread and cane syrup. We didn't get too hungry.

BENHAM: No. I think the people who lived in the country had better chance.

BUTLER: Because they could grow something.

BENHAM: They had maybe sweet potatoes and potatoes; that was something, wasn't it?

BUTLER: Long then there weren't any bugs in them. You could grow all the sweet potatoes you wanted. At that time all you had to do was stick them out.

BENHAM: That's something.

BUTLER: You know we had to set out potatoes in August.

BENHAM: Oh, my goodness, that is early.

BUTLER: And then we didn't have to work them much. But the early ones that they set out and worked them and then cut the vines, you know, and set out other patches with the vines and they say that those vines make better ones than they raise from the dead.

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BENHAM: Oh, is that so?

BUTLER: Yes.

BENHAM: Well, that is good to know about. Who dug the graves a long time ago?

BUTLER: People in the community. Just like when somebody passed^s, they go up there and ring the bell. And they go up there and so^{ee} who it was and then they find out where the individual is going to be buried. And then that next day, whenever they got ready to bury him, there would be enough folks to go up there and just be in one another's way nearly to dig the grave. I know one boy that went up there to dig the grave and there was forty-one (41) up there to help dig the grave.

BENHAM: Oh my goodness.

BUTLER: Forty-one (41) persons to dig one grave.

BENHAM: Well, what do they do now? Do they still do that?

BUTLER: Well, yes, ma'am, in places. Most places now the county pays for the digging of the grave. If you dig it, they pay you, but if you want them they send someone out there with that machine to dig it.

BENHAM: Oh yes, I've heard about that machine that does that. Well, what do you do to get ready for burial services?

BUTLER: Well, the biggest thing you know, they will contact the family and see how the family wants the plans carried out. And they try to do it, you know, in the best wishes of the family. If the family has a certain preacher they want, you know, to tend the funeral and if that preacher isn't a member of that church, then this pastor will give over and let him, you know, tend the funeral. See, when they elect pastors to the church, he says his

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duty is to bury all bodies and you, marry all couples and be at their service. But now is anybody has a certain preacher that they want to bury the individual, it's okay with him.

BENHAM: Well, that's a nice generous thing for him to do. He could say, "No, I don't want anybody in the place but me." When they baptize someone, do they still go down and have a baptismal in the back of the church or do they go to the river and baptize anybody?

BUTLER: Well, we have a pool in the church now. We used to go down to old Silver Creek, the creek where you cross. That's where I was baptized at.

BENHAM: Oh yes, I think that's a wonderful thing. I like that. Do any of the churches around here do that anymore, go down to a river?

BUTLER: None that I know of. But one church out here that I served for a preacher when he was sick - that was down at Tilton - I baptized twelve (12) in Tilton Creek.

BENHAM: Oh, that's a beautiful place. You know, we went there one spring and they had these mountain laurel growing all the way up from the creek bed all the way up this hill. Are they still there now?

BUTLER: Yes, ma'am, some are still there.

BENHAM: That is the most gorgeous thing I've ever seen. Of course, you know if the cows ate it, it would be poisonous. But it's a beautiful sight.

BUTLER: Yes, it sure is.

BENHAM: And that creek is just as cold.

BUTLER: Just as cold.

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BENHAM: We went there and the mosquitoes were biting us and we had to wade through the water.

BUTLER: That's some cold water.

BENHAM: Yes, it is. Oh, I love that. I think that's the nicest thing to do is to go and be baptized in the water.

BUTLER: Running water.

BENHAM: Yes, in running water.

BUTLER: Yes, I think so too.

BENHAM: The was Christ was baptized. Could you tell me about how much a casket cost about when you first started out preaching?

BUTLER: Yes, ma'am. Eighteen (18) dollars.

BENHAM: Eighteen (18) dollars. Well, what kind was it?

BUTLER: I don't know. We went up here to Silver Creek. Mr. Rauls, he had them on hand. He had a store and he got it some way or other and so got one for eighteen (18) dollars. And long ago back in that time, a person didn't have that much. We had a carpenter that would make one.

BENHAM: Would they make it the very day that the person died or would they have any on hand?

BUTLER: No, ma'am. They made it the very day he died, the day before he was buried. They'd make it. When they found out he had to have one, they made it.

BENHAM: Do you think cremation is Christian?

BUTLER: No, ma'am, I don't. I sure don't. I don't, you know.

BENHAM: I don't either.

BUTLER: Because you know the Bible says the soul goes back to the God

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that giveth breath and the body back to the earth. They didn't say the ashes go back to the earth.

BENHAM: Yes, that's right.

BUTLER: I feel like it ought to be put in the ground.

BENHAM: Yes.

BUTLER: And go on back to mother earth.

BENHAM: That's right. If we say we want to walk in His steps, you know, He wasn't cremated, was He?

BUTLER: He certainly wasn't.

BENHAM: There is something that has always puzzled me. Why are photographs put on the tombstones of people who have died?

BUTLER: I just don't know why.

BENHAM: Do you have any like that around here?

BUTLER: Yes, ma'am. There is one up there, there isn't but one up there at Rosehill, up there at the church. Lady put her husband's picture on there and it shows up just as plain. You know, I believe in having a marker made in his name.

(Begin Side Two of Tape)

BENHAM: Would you go on and tell us some more about the photograph, Rev. Butler?

BUTLER: Yes, ma'am. This photograph, it holds up beautiful and looks firm and everything, but somehow or other I just never did, you know, believe in too much of that. But I do want to see a marker put, because there are so many graves up there now. You notice the grave, but you don't know who it is. Now we used to have what we call the graveyard sexton and he was the

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one who could tell just about where all graves were. But just a few years when the grave sinks down and grass grows over it and people quit cleaning it off, you forget who's who. They bury so many there maybe they might pile a little dirt over here and cover that one up where you can't see it so well. You forget whose grave it is. But if they have a marker there, then you can tell whose grave it is, something like that. Tombstones, I've poured slabs on graves, you know, and engraved their names on it, on the slab.

BENHAM: A long time ago did you ever have a tombstone made out of wood? Did they used to do that a long time ago?

BUTLER: I heard that they did, I never saw one personally to know, but I saw one that looked like it was just a, you might say just a kind of a trunk of a tree that had limbs sticking out.

BENHAM: Really?

BUTLER: Well, you know, I didn't examine it to see what it was, but that's what it looked like to me it was.

BENHAM: I mean a real live tree that had been cut off and stuck up?

BUTLER: Cut off and stuck up, that's right.

BENHAM: And stuck there, that's interesting to know about. Were there funeral homes when you started preaching?

BUTLER: Not too many around. There might have been in Brookhaven and Columbia, but there weren't here. I believe they had started one in Prentiss a little before I started preaching. I believe they did.

BENHAM: Well, why didn't they have any?

BUTLER: Well, I don't know ma'am; I imagine it was because times were so tight people, I reckon, weren't interested in joining anything.

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BENHAM: Well, how did they take care of somebody that died?

BUTLER: Well, sometimes the individual, maybe he'd have to sell some of his stock to buy the casket with. Then if they had some lumber there or - then they have went and tore pieces of boards off the barn to make the casket out of to bury him in. And get some real thin black cloth and decorate it, scallop it. Put a lid to it and all like that.

BENHAM: I see.

BUTLER: And then they would make them, as I said. And then they'd take up a collection, you know, somebody would be standing there with a plate and take up an offering to help with the expense.

BENHAM: I see. You know, in a way that's kind of nice, because it brought people very close together and they had a feeling that people were helping each other. Now it's a very sort of a cold sort of thing, isn't it?

BUTLER: I can remember that they used to have a custom there that when anybody died, everybody there would throw in a clod of dirt. I don't know what that was for.

BENHAM: You mean into the grave?

BUTLER: Into the grave.

BENHAM: Well, I've seen that done even today. What does that signify?

BUTLER: That's what I never did learn.

BENHAM: Would it mean like, you know, dust thou art to dust returneth? I mean maybe we are helping. Maybe it's being a part of it.

BUTLER: Maybe being a part of it. That could have been what it was, being a part of it.

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BENHAM: Because that was done not very long ago to a sister-in-law of mine.

BUTLER: I don't know when that happened down in this community now. But I remember though everybody walked up there and got a clod of dirt and threw it in the grave and walked back and got out of another's way and go on around. I reckon it was like having a party.

BENHAM: That's right. How did the family prepare the body for burial since they had no funeral home? How did they go about doing that?

BUTLER: They would get a saucer - they'd keep the body at home, you see, in a room, in a cold room there. What we call on a cooling board until they got the casket.

BENHAM: On a what?

BUTLER: On a cooling board, we call it, until we get the casket made.

BENHAM: I see. What's a cooling board?

BUTLER: Well, that was just a board sitting up that he was on this solid board with a chair under each end of it and he was up there so he could cool off good, I reckon. And he'd have that salt on him in a saucer sitting on his chest.

BENHAM: Yes.

BUTLER: And if the eyes didn't close good and stay closed, they would put a piece of money on it.

BENHAM: Oh.

BUTLER: To hold the eyes down.

BENHAM: Well, what was the salt for?

BUTLER: I don't know. It might have been to keep them from spoiling

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until they'd get him buried.

BENHAM: Oh, oh, I see.

BUTLER: But they didn't keep them out long then; couldn't.

BENHAM: All right. And how was the body taken to the cemetery?

BUTLER: Sometimes, have been on ox wagons. Then from that to mule wagons. Just carry it on a wagon, mule and wagon and drive on up to the cemetery.

BENHAM: Well, what were the people dressed in, the ones that died? Did they have a special color to be dressed in?

BUTLER: No, ma'am, no special color. They would bury some of them in some of their permanent clothes, what they had, whatever dress that looked suitable for them. Whatever they had a mind to put on them. Maybe sometimes in whatever dress they heard the individual say that he loved or that he liked. They'd bury him in that garment.

BENHAM: I see. Why did the men wear a black band around their sleeve? Or did they wear one?

BUTLER: Well, yes, some did, yes, ma'am. I reckon they call that the day they die they put a black bow, put that in front of the pulpit and tack it on that curtain, you know.

BENHAM: Yes.

BUTLER: The officers in remembrance of didn't know the death was in that rank, in that family, some of the times.

BENHAM: I see.

BUTLER: So the preacher then would have a black band around his arm to let them know he was in sympathy with them, is what I'd say.

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BENHAM: I see, all right. Well, that's a good interpretation for that. How were marriages performed?

BUTLER: Well, most of them just like they wanted to get married. They would set the time and place and get the notification out. And then the people would go there and sometimes they would serve and sometimes they'd just throw rice on them. They ought to been saving that rice.

BENHAM: Way back then they probably did. During the Depression they probably couldn't do it. Why do they throw rice?

BUTLER: I just don't know. I just never did get it mapped out why they threw rice. I think they threw rice on my wife. They threw rice on us.

BENHAM: Maybe it's a good luck sign.

BUTLER: Might have been. They must have some sort of sign in it.

BENHAM: Can you tell me what a shivaree is? Shivaree.

BUTLER: Shivaree?

BENHAM: Have you ever heard that word before?

BUTLER: No, ma'am. I don't believe I have.

BENHAM: I have heard it somewhere in a book I read. I think they come and serenade the couple or something like that. A whole bunch of people will come and sing, you know, right after they've been married.

BUTLER: Oh, yes.

BENHAM: Something like that and I think he takes her out into the woods or something. They are already married. But I think they call that a shivaree and I thought maybe you might have known it. Tell me why it happened. Well, what steps did you take to, say, to baptize a baby?

BUTLER: Well, I've never baptized a baby.

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BENHAM: You've never baptized a little child? Or christened a baby?

BUTLER: No, ma'am.

BENHAM: You haven't? It's just been adults that you've been doing this to? But they do baptize babies.

BUTLER: I heard it, but I've never done that.

BENHAM: I see. Did they have divorces a long time ago?

BUTLER: I can't remember too much of divorces. I can't remember too many, you know, divorce cases. It might have been called, you know. I didn't take no paper, see, and didn't have a T.V. or no radio to tell nothing about the news and things. I never did hear too much about divorces. All I could hear was so-and-so and his wife are parted. She is staying with some other man and then he's started staying with some woman. And I never did know, you know, back there then just what was taking place. All I knew, they just quit, all such as that. That was the procedure.

BENHAM: I see.

BUTLER: I never did know. But I never did hear nothing about so-and-so got his divorce and all like that.

BENHAM: You know, that really didn't come into being anyway until, you know, up until this time, where they have divorces. A lot of times if anybody was divorced, I remember when even I was growing up, say like twelve (12) years old, why that was unheard of. Why, they were horrified and talked about it and whispered about it and no one knew anything about it. But now it's just an open thing. Do you have more of that in your church now then you did?

BUTLER: You mean divorce?

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BENHAM: Yes, divorces than they had when you first started?

BUTLER: Well, no ma'am, we don't have too many divorce cases, no we don't. We have a few. Some there just don't want to do right. Don't want to live right and they can't stay together. Something like that kind. We have a few that get tired of it and put in for divorce,

BENHAM: Well, people that did that, did they ever come to you and did you ever counsel them and say, you know, try and get along or anything like that?

BUTLER: I have told some, yes, ma'am, that I wouldn't do such a thing; I'd just wait, you know. Lots of times you do things through the heat of passion that you're sorry of afterwards.

BENHAM: That's right.

BUTLER: But then sometimes they'll just go ahead and do the thing before you know anything about it and you can't help them none.

BENHAM: That's right. Were you ever part of a movement or a riot or anything like that? Were you part of a movement?

BUTLER: No, ma'am.

BENHAM: All right. Did you watch the television play "Roots?" Did you watch that television play called "Roots?" It was written by this man named Alex Haley. And he was a Negro. He went back to Africa to find out all about his people and he called the book Roots. It's a best seller. All of America knows about it. Did you ever see it on T.V.?

BUTLER: No, ma'am. I don't believe I did. I just can't remember now if I did. I can't place it.

BENHAM: I didn't get to see it. All we can get is two (2) channels

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and that is channel three and channel twelve. But I just wanted to know if you heard about that book. You didn't know about it?

BUTLER: No, ma'am.

BENHAM: Well, you are going to have to go to the library down here and get that book and read about it. Right? Do you know any stories about slave times?

BUTLER: No, ma'am. I don't believe I know anything about slave times, no more than my mother was telling me that her mother was a slave and that they did separate her and her sister. I think the fellow that bought her sister carried her somewhere in Texas and she was left out here in Lawrence County. And so they didn't have any idea what was going on, because the man up there was bidding off how much he'd give for this one and how much he'd give for that one. And I think he gave fifteen (15) dollars or fifteen hundred (1500) dollars for my grandmother's sister what they carried to Texas.

BENHAM: My goodness.

BUTLER: I never did see her.

BENHAM: Well, did you ever hear that the slaves were treated badly or something?

BUTLER: No, ma'am. No more than that if the slaves would mind good like they would want them to do, then they were nice to them. But if he didn't do just like they told him, they would punish him. Sometimes they'd put him in the stable, feed him that way, whip him. But I heard one place up here, if you went through there in slavery times, if they didn't have room for in a little house they had there, they'd put you in the stable and lock you up in that stable and give you hay. Hay and corn. Feed you just

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like they would an animal. But this fellow said they could eat the corn, but they couldn't do anything with that hay. My uncle now, he used to be pretty bad to go in your field in roasting ear time. He could eat the corn off that cob right in the field.

BENHAM: That's right.

BUTLER: But I often wondered, you know, about dried shelled corn. I imagine that's pretty horrible to go through with.

BENHAM: Yes, yes.

BUTLER: But I'm glad that the Lord brought us out of slavery because, you know, yet it's still you know, there's ome good folks and some bad folks.

BENHAM: That's right.

BUTLER: And so I wouldn't want to live under slavery. Not since coming into the knowledge of knowing like I know now.

BENHAM: That's right, that's right.

BUTLER: Back then some of them didn't have no other choice. But I just imagine though, you know, they just didn't. Well, when you don't know, you just don't know.

BENHAM: That's right.

BUTLER: And so you'll have to do like, you know, like your master tells you to do and that's like children and parents, you know. If your children don't do like you tell them, you got a punishment laying up for them. And so that's the way I see that, but I have seen on halve, you know, where some people would - that's since slavery times were over with - that this man, he wasn't all that well fixed in a way you might say, and he was trying to get himself another fellow because he would let them get there and almost

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make the crop and then they'd come up and split. The confusion was enough that he ran them away from there. Then he'd get the whole crop. But he had to hire somebody else to help him gather it.

BENHAM: Oh, you mean he'd do that to the slaves?

BUTLER: Do that to the slaves.

BENHAM: I see. I mean get the slaves to do the crop?

BUTLER: That's right.

BENHAM: And then when the crop was there, he'd drive them off?

BUTLER: Drive them off.

BENHAM: Well, I see that going on even today with everybody. You know, not only just with slavery. I've seen white people do that to each other.

BUTLER: Me too.

BENHAM: I've seen black people do that to each other.

BUTLER: That's right.

BENHAM: I've seen that in other parts of the world, you know, where one person will do that to an individual.

BUTLER: Oh yes.

BENHAM: So a lot times you think we haven't gone very far have we? We still hate each other. We still do things to each other that are wrong. Well, can you tell me some other examples of injustice besides the slave times that the black people have suffered in this county?

BUTLER: Well, sometimes you take it when we have had law enforcement and some of them don't want to abide by the law and quite naturally that would make the law get mad. And I read a book once that says never whip

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your child when you're mad, you know. Says if he did something to make you mad, you wait. Says if you whip him when you're mad, you aren't whipping, you're fighting.

BENHAM: I see. Well, that's a good thing to know.

BUTLER: And so they would make this law enforcement officer mad and then everybody you know, wants to be treated right, as far as that is concerned. And then the law, looks like to me, sometimes because he has got the law, looks like he goes a little further than he ought to go.

BENHAM: Yes, I see.

BUTLER: I've seen that happen, but I always had it in my mind this: that if I violated the law and the man came up to arrest me and I give up, I'd say, "I give up now. I'm ready for you to handcuff me." I don't want them hitting on me. You see, I feel when I give up, I feel like he ought to take care of me.

BENHAM: That's right.

BUTLER: But you know some of them will, this fellow he doesn't want to give up until the fellow got a busted skull with that club, you know. That don't make you feel good to see somebody.

BENHAM: That's right.

BUTLER: But lots of times we bring it on ourselves, I can see it in that angle. Now he'd tell him to hush. But this fellow wouldn't hush. So that would cause him to get licked. But I felt like if he had hushed he might not have got that lick, he might have gotten it. I have heard of it that they'd take them in the jail and then whip them. But I never saw it. But then you can hear anything, you know.

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BENHAM: Yes.

BUTLER: And so I never did base my theory too strong on what I hear. I always loved, you know, to find out.

BENHAM: Really find out and dig it out.

BUTLER: That's right. So many times you can put the wrong report out.

BENHAM: That's right, you certainly can. Lots of times newspapers will do that too. They won't give it to you straight.

BUTLER: That's right.

BENHAM: You remember when we were having all those race riots in 1960 and 1961? Did your attitude towards the white people change?

BUTLER: No, ma'am. I didn't. I just felt like some of this was something that was undercover that I didn't know about and so, anything you don't know about, you can't help it much.

BENHAM: No, you can't. That's right.

BUTLER: Now just like I heard up here the whole family got burned up and since they got burned up, I heard this fellow had done a whole lot of big talk somewhere. Now I just heard tha. And you're the first person I'm telling that to.

BENHAM: All right.

BUTLER: Because I thought the boy was all right. He was, as far as I know. I saw him several times, but I learned this much about him - that he's a fellow you couldn't put down anything and then go back and get it if he was there. I was around enough to learn that and if I had anything I'd always carry it back and put it in my box and lock it up because it wasn't going to stay there is he saw it.

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BENHAM: Right.

BUTLER: And so this was a kind of mystery to me to see a whole family get burned up and most all of them grown, big enough to get out. Now the one thing that I didn't never understand and it happened up here at this church but it didn't happen out there at my house, that they were burning crosses and I just wondered what was that for? You know.

BENHAM: What year was this when they did this?

BUTLER: When they did that, let me see. Girl, when was that, can you remember? Rev. Thigpen was pastoring up there. Somewhere along in 1965. Somewhere along in there.

BENHAM: And they were burning crosses?

BUTLER: Burning crosses before the churches, yes, ma'am.

BENHAM: I see. Would that be the Ku Klux Klan that was doing this?

BUTLER: That's what I said it was. Now for me to know who it was, I couldn't say.

BENHAM: No, no, I don't want to know who it was. I mean, but I just wanted to know if you knew about the Ku Klux Klan in this county.

BUTLER: Yes, ma'am.

BENHAM: I wonder if that could have been a part of that, the burning of the crosses.

BUTLER: Well, I don't know. You know if it said definite, you know to tell the truth about the thing,

BENHAM: Yes.

BUTLER: But we all have our minds and our beliefs.

BENHAM: That's right.

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BUTLER: I have gone out there and found a paper that was thrown down out there.

BENHAM: A what?

BUTLER: A paper, you know, a little paper.

BENHAM: Oh, a little paper.

BUTLER: Yes, a little paper. And it said the Ku Klux Klan and then they said where they were inviting them to the rally. Come on to where the rally is and show you how to get to where the rally was going to be and all that.

BENHAM: I see.

BUTLER: Now for me to know anything definite, I never did know anything, you know, permanent that I could say.

BENHAM: Right.

BUTLER: I have always believed that's what it was but it could have not have been.

BENHAM: That's right.

BUTLER: There's a lot of people, you know, are suffering punishment that is innocent.

BENHAM: That's right.

BUTLER: And lots of them going around that's guilty. And when you don't know the guilty person, you don't know who he is until you come to know him.

BENHAM: Do you know anything about voodoo?

BUTLER: No, ma'am, I sure don't.

BENHAM: Have you ever heard that word?

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BUTLER: I heard that, yes, ma'am. I've heard that.

BENHAM: Do you know what voodoo is?

BUTLER: Well, they claim it is something or other that will, I don't know, confuse your mind and maybe trick your mind some way or other. Now, I went to a little old circus one time and I could see people, you know, playing games and then I went up there and I was going to get me a dollar changed and the fellow gave me eight (8) nickles in American money and two (2) were in some other country. And I went back there to get my other two (2) nickles and while I was there, somebody got ten (10) dollars out of my pocket and I don't know which way he went.

BENHAM: Oh lands.

BUTLER: I lost ten (10) dollars trying to get ten (10) cents.

BENHAM: Trying to get ten (10) cents. Well, that taught you a lesson, didn't it?

BUTLER: Taught me a lesson.

BENHAM: And back then ten (10) dollars was a lot money, but then you could have lost your shirt too.

BUTLER: Oh, yes, that's right.

BENHAM: You could have lost a whole lot more money.

BUTLER: That's right, that's right.

BENHAM: And I bet from then on you had buttons and pins and everything else on every pocket.

BUTLER: I can't remember going to them anymore. I got enough of them. I might go and look around, but I ain't going to carry anything but myself.

BENHAM: That's a good idea.

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BUTLER: But there's people they claim they can do things and this here voodoo is what, you know, some folks call, and give different names. Some call it voodoo and some call it hoodoo, so they do you something or other.

BENHAM: I see.

BUTLER: But I don't know too much about it. I heard them say you can put down something or other and you walk over it, run you crazy or put a spell of sickness on you. But for me to know it's true, I don't know.

BENHAM: Rev. Butler, do you know any ghost stories?

BUTLER: No, ma'am. I don't believe I can recall any now.

BENHAM: All right. What famous Negro people do you admire the most?

BUTLER: Let me see who I admire the most. I can't get too many of them placed now. Now, Professor Dampeer who used to teach over there in Monticello, now I admire him for one thing: that when my boy was trying to get a job how he helped him. He would let me go over there and help the boy work in his place while the boy would go and take an interview and come back to his job. So I went over there and asked him about that. The boy wanted to keep something or other doing and so Professor Dampeer accepted my plea and plan that I could go there and work while the baby goes and takes the interview to try and get the job he has now. And then also Professor Lucas up here at Silver Creek. Now he is the man that I came to know by his father, in his father's lifetime, and since then I come to know him. He was a good man and look like easy to get along with. And so I admire him for the interest that he held in the children while they were trying to learn and go to school. And then there're several that maybe I could think of, you know, but just right off hand that way, I can't.

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BENHAM: Well, those are enough if you feel that you admire them a lot. What changes do you look forward to in the near future for the Negroes?

BUTLER: Well, I don't see too much for them that they should be complaining if, you know, things still stay on like they are going. Now, I tell you what, now this might just be me. I reckon I shouldn't say this because it's on tape, but I'm going to say it anyhow. Now I felt this way. Back yonder when the schools, you know, was segregated, there were some I felt like that got along better, you know, in their studies than they did since they've been integrated. And this integration put some children going further from home than they were going, you know. That's how the school went on.

BENHAM: The busing.

BUTLER: The busing?

BENHAM: Yes.

BUTLER: And so now to me that didn't coincide with me so much in a way. Now here is what I did want. I did want good teachers and good schools. That was as far as I was concerned.

BENHAM: Right, because if you educate a person...

BUTLER: You're just educated.

BENHAM: You've helped him, you know.

BUTLER: That's right. But some had the impression that there would be something or another done different. Now I don't know who they were, but some had that kind of impression. Now, let's just say for instance, suppose I had a good school down here and you had one out yonder and maybe they were under the impression that they would carry something better to your school

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than they would bring to mine. That's why they wanted to get them together, so if they brought anything to your school it would be equally shared. That's maybe the way we think of it now. But how it is to be handled, I just don't know. I've never boiled it down and got my mind thoroughly satisfied and convinced about this situation and the way it's gone.

BENHAM: All right. Where is the church that you preach in located right now? Where are you going to preach this Sunday?

BUTLER: I will preach this Sunday at South Spring Hill.

BENHAM: Now where is this located?

BUTLER: It's down there out from Tilton, down in Beat Three. I'll be preaching at the Institute.

BENHAM: The Institute. And what did you call this church?

BUTLER: South Spring Hill.

BENHAM: What is the funniest thing that ever happened to you?

BUTLER: Funniest thing ever happened to me, let me see. Oh, I believe the funniest thing that happened to me and the way it did was I surprised my wife on her birthday. Oh yes, surprised my wife on her birthday.

BENHAM: No wonder you put your hand to your mouth so she wouldn't hear you.

BUTLER: It tickled me because she didn't know it.

BENHAM: When was this birthday?

BUTLER: This last Thursday.

BENHAM: Last Thursday. All right, tell us about it.

BUTLER: Well, I had told my daughter-in-law, I said, "I want to surprise the wife," and I said, "and I don't know just what to get her. I

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want to get something she wants." You know, I wouldn't want to go buy something or another and then it would be something or other she'd just put up with. But I got her to take her to town and I said, "Now, you act as though you're trying to buy a dress and you find out what she likes." And I says, "You can just put it away on lay-away and then just go back and tell the lady that you don't want it on lay-away. Tell the lady to hold the dress until a certain date and then I'll be up there to get it." And so she went up there and helped her find a dress and so she thought the dress might get away and she said, "I'm just going to go ahead and pay for the dress as though it was mine." And she brought it on home. And they found a hat there and let her pick it out and she wanted to buy something too and so she was going to put the hat on the lay-away since she found she liked the hat. And so she put the hat on the lay-away for her and said, "Oh, yes, the lady didn't give me a receipt." And she went back and paid for the hat. And I was going to go and pick up the hat the next day but I waited until the stores closed. And so when I told some in the community to come and I said, "I want you all to come about eight o'clock." I said, "She'll be at the house." I said, "And when you all come, there won't be anything happening. You all come and just come in singing, 'Happy Birthday.'" So the two (2) first ones passed by and she said, "Oh, you all sure look good, going walking together." They walked down to my sister's house and told her about it; she didn't know about it.

BENHAM: I see.

BUTLER: So they came back up here and when they came back they came through the yard. And I said, "You all come on in." And when they got in

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they came singing "Happy birthday, happy birthday." She said, "Whose birthday?" They said, "Yours." And she said, "What is the date?" Then I went and got the dress.

BENHAM: Oh.

BUTLER: She said, "I knew something. I thought she was buying that dress for herself and I knew too she was getting it too small, I thought." So she picked out her own dress.

BENHAM: Oh, that was sweet. That was a cute way to do that.

BUTLER: It was funny to me,

BENHAM: You really pulled the wool over her eyes at that time.

BUTLER: She wouldn't have been dressed like she was with them coming in much less it being her birthday.

BENHAM: Oh, my lands.

BUTLER: I know I got her that time,

BENHAM: Good. Do you have a philosophy of life, Rev. Butler?

BUTLER: No, ma'am. I mean I don't understand what you are talking about.

BENHAM: Well, a philosophy like, well you are a minister. Do you go by the Golden Rule?

BUTLER: Yes, yes.

BENHAM: Yes, that's what I mean, philosophy. You try to treat everyone right. They don't always treat you that way, but still you do it.

BUTLER: Because it's right to do it.

BENHAM: It's one of our commandments. God's commandment. That's what a philosophy of life means.

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BUTLER: Oh, I believe in doing to others as I would have them do to me. But lots of times it doesn't come in return.

BENHAM: Yes.

BUTLER: Yet still, I don't hold any grudges because the Bible says envy is mine and I will repay says the Lord. And if you hold your peace I'll fight the battle. So if you give it in God's hands, he'll work it out all right. That's what I understand what you're talking about.

BENHAM: All right. Are you a fire and brimstone preacher?

BUTLER: Yes, ma'am.

BENHAM: All right. So now would you please preach me a five (5) minute sermon on any subject?

BUTLER: Yes, ma'am. Are you ready now?

BENHAM: I'm ready.

BUTLER: There in this text we find that Jesus asked his disciples, "Whom do men say I am? And what think ye of Christ and whose Son is He?" And the Pharisees and the Sadducees, when they heard this they sat in council how they could entangle him in his talk in order that they might find some way to accuse Jesus by saying whose Son He was. And they went and began asking him questions. What do you think? "Is it lawful for to pay tribute to Caesar or not?" But Jesus knowing their thought, said of them, "Bring me a piece of money. And whose inscription is this?" And they said, "Caesar." And he said, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's." And then they still didn't get anywhere. Because if they could have gotten Him to go against the government, then they could have put him out of business. You know, any time that you

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violate the government, you put yourself in jeopardy of being, you know, a criminal. But Jesus made it so plain that they had to let Him know that He wasn't trying to destroy the law nor the prophets. And then not only that, they wanted to know, "Master, which is the first and great commandment?" And He said, "The first and great commandment is, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul and with all thy mind and thy strength and thy neighbor as thyself.' And the second is like unto the first, 'Love thy neighbor as thyself.' And on these two commandments hangs all the laws and the prophets." And so then they said, "Now Master, Moses said that if a man died and left no seed, his brother should marry his wife and raise up seed unto his brother. And now there is with us seven (7) brothers and the first one married and died leaving no seed. So on until the seventh and at last the woman died and in the resurrection, whose wife will she be?" And He said, "You do err not knowing the Scriptures, for they neither marry nor give into marriage, but you are all angels in heaven." And so he gathered them to know that if they wanted to try and find His opinion. You know, nobody is satisfied with their own opinion. Sometimes whatever comes up they want to find out what the other fellow says about it before they base their theory on what they think about it and so that's why Jesus asked them, "Now, your personal opinion, now what you think about it?" Now my opinion about Jesus, now He was the world's best friend. He gave His life that we might have a right to the tree of life and in my opinion, Jesus was all that the world will ever need. If we will accept His plan and His salvation, we can't be lost. And then not only that, if we, my opinion about Jesus, that He is a rock in a weary land, shelter in a time of storm, a bridge over deep

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water and a way-maker out of no way. And then all that He is a friend when you are friendless. If you will put your trust in Him, you can run on and not get weary. You can endure hardness better if you trust in Jesus as your friend, because Jesus said that if you come after me, deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me daily. But if we can't bear our cross, then we can't wear no crown. And for that cause I want to say my opinion about Jesus, He is the One to put your trust in, because He says, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, learn of me, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light." And then not only that, my opinion is still about Him, that if you will let Him, He will lead you out of trials and tribulations and lead you in the paths of righteousness, because He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the light. No man comes to the Father but by me." And if you want to get to the Father, you got to go by Jesus. Because He said, "I'm the way, the truth and the light," and not only that, He said, "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man open up I'll come in and sup with him and he with me." And for that cause I say my opinion is, He's the world's best friend.

BENHAM: Thank you very much. That is very, very beautiful. Now would you and your wife sing one verse of your favorite hymn, but since your wife says she is hoarse, then you sing.

BUTLER: I'll sing.

BENHAM: Then you sing one verse of your favorite hymn.

BUTLER: I like to stay here longer, than man's allotted days.
And wash their feet and changing, Oh life, oh lead the way.
But if my Savior calls me, to that sweet home on high
I'll live with Him forever, in glory by and by.

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Oh yes, I'll live in glory, in glory by and by.
I'll sing and tell the story, there on high.
There with my dear Redeemer, no more, no more to die.
Oh yes, I'll live in glory, in glory by and by.

BENHAM: And what is the name of this hymn?

BUTLER: "I'd like to live here longer."

BENHAM: That's very beautiful. Thank you very much for singing it
for us.

(End of Interview)

(Transcribed by Evelyn Benham)