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Steve Dawson Cliburn
Interviewee

Route 2, Box 146

Silver Creek miss
Address

Priscilla P. Phansen

Director

Lincoln-Lawrence-Franklin
Regional Library

July 20, 1978
Date of Agreement

Great Southern Lumber Company: Camp Shelby: Blacksmithing (Farrier)

in Lawrence County, MS.

Subject of Tape(s)

Lincoln-Lawrence-Franklin Regional Library
Oral History
Data Sheet

FULL NAME Steve Denson Cliburn, Senior
ADDRESS Rt. 2, Silver Creek, MS PHONE 886-7702
BIRTHPLACE Hooker, MS DATE OF BIRTH July 24, 1906
EDUCATION Seventh grade - Sills Schoolhouse

OCCUPATION Blacksmith and carpenter

TRAVELS Indiana, Illinois, Texas

SPOUSE'S FULL NAME Lennie Nesbit Sullivan
BIRTHPLACE Shivers, MS (Simpson County) DATE OF BIRTH Unknown
OCCUPATION Housewife

NUMBER OF CHILDREN Three (3)
NAMES OF CHILDREN

Kenneth Earl Cliburn

Burl Cliburn

Steve Cliburn, Jr.

FATHER'S FULL NAME Henry Calvin Cliburn
BIRTHPLACE Lawrence County, MS DATE OF BIRTH 1874
OCCUPATION Blacksmith, farmer, & carpenter

MOTHER'S FULL NAME Hattie Arvina Cliburn
BIRTHPLACE Lawrence County, MS DATE OF BIRTH Unknown
OCCUPATION Housewife

MAJOR NATIONAL AND/OR LOCAL EVENTS OF IMPORTANCE DISCUSSED

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

Great Southern Lumber Company; Camp Shelby; Blacksmithing (Farrier);
Making ox yokes.

An Interview with
Steve Denson Cliburn, Sr.,
April 10, 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 Steve Cliburn, Sr., Crooked Creek Road, Silver Creek, Mississippi, April 10, 1977. Interviewed by Evelyn Benham. Mr. Cliburn, what is your full name?

CLIBURN: Steve Denson Cliburn.

BENHAM: What is your address and phone number?

CLIBURN: Route 2, Silver Creek. Phone number is 886-7702.

BENHAM: When were you born?

CLIBURN: 1906.¹

BENHAM: And where were you born?

CLIBURN: I was born at Hooker, Mississippi.

BENHAM: And where is that?

CLIBURN: That's down the road, down there, used to be a store and a grist mill down there. The Johnsons ran it.

BENHAM: And is this in Lawrence County?

CLIBURN: Yes.

BENHAM: What is your father's full name?

CLIBURN: Henry Calvin Cliburn.

BENHAM: And when and where was he born?

CLIBURN: He was born in Lawrence County about two-and-a-half miles up northeast of here.

BENHAM: What sort of business was your father in?

CLIBURN: What?

BENHAM: What sort of business was your father in?

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CLIBURN: Blacksmithing, mostly, and farming and carpentering.

BENHAM: What is your mother's full name?

CLIBURN: Hattie Arvina Cliburn.

BENHAM: Hattie, what?

CLIBURN: Hattie Arvina Cliburn.

BENHAM: What's the 'R' stand for?

CLIBURN: I don't know.

BENHAM: And 'Vina' - how do you spell Vina?

CLIBURN: V-I-N-A, I guess.

BENHAM: And when and where was she born?

CLIBURN: She was born in Lawrence County.

BENHAM: Do you remember when she was born?

CLIBURN: No, I don't know.

BENHAM: Well, how old was your mother when she died?

CLIBURN: She was eighty-seven (87).

BENHAM: Do you remember when your father was born?

CLIBURN: In 1874.

BENHAM: Did your mother work outside of the home?

CLIBURN: Worked in the home. Housewife.

BENHAM: How old were you when you started school?

CLIBURN: I was six (6) years old.

BENHAM: What was the name of the school that you first went to?

CLIBURN: Sills Schoolhouse.

BENHAM: Where was it located?

CLIBURN: About a mile up the road off on what we call the Grange Road.

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BENHAM: And was this also in Lawrence County?

CLIBURN: Yes.

BENHAM: How did you get to school?

CLIBURN: Walked.

BENHAM: About how far were you from your school?

CLIBURN: Oh, about a mile-and-a-quarter.

BENHAM: Were there many children going to school at this time?

CLIBURN: Pretty good bunch.

BENHAM: How many grades were there in the school?

CLIBURN: There were nine (9) grades.

BENHAM: Were school buses used then?

CLIBURN: No.

BENHAM: Did you get to finish school?

CLIBURN: No.

BENHAM: Well, how far did you go?

CLIBURN: I got to the seventh grade.

BENHAM: And did you just quit or did you just finish? Why did you stop?

CLIBURN: Well, I got big enough to go to work and the Great Southern came in here and I quit and went to work.

BENHAM: The Great Southern?

CLIBURN: Lumber company.

BENHAM: Oh, the lumber company?

CLIBURN: The Great Southern Lumber Company.

BENHAM: And what did you do there?

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CLIBURN: Oh, I've done everything. I blacksmithed; I carpentered; I just did everything there was. They used me for a handy fellow to do whatever they didn't have a man to do.

BENHAM: How old were you at that time?

CLIBURN: When I started to work with them, I signed a minor's list. Fourteen (14) years old.

BENHAM: All right, and how long did you work for them?

CLIBURN: Off and on for about twelve (12), fifteen (15) years.

BENHAM: How did you become interested in being a blacksmith?

CLIBURN: I don't know. I just always knew how to do it and always liked it and wanted to do it.

BENHAM: Well, where did you see it being done? I mean, you had to see it or did you see it in a book or where did you get the idea?

CLIBURN: Well, I guess you could say I got it from my daddy. Watching him work, helping him work.

BENHAM: And where did he have his blacksmith shop?

CLIBURN: Just across the road right out there, the old one. Yes.

BENHAM: Across from where you are living now?

CLIBURN: Yes, right out there.

BENHAM: All right. Well, who did you first start working with? Was it your father in the blacksmith shop?

CLIBURN: No, I started work with the Great Southern Lumber Company.

BENHAM: No, no. I mean as a blacksmith, when you decided to be a blacksmith, become one, who did you first start to work with?

CLIBURN: I worked with my daddy, I guess.

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BENHAM: And can you remember what year this was that you started working with your father in a blacksmith shop?

CLIBURN: All my life. Time I was eight (8) or ten (10) years old, I guess.

BENHAM: Well, you know, you said you worked for the lumber company.

CLIBURN: Well, we didn't work for them all the time. We worked, you know, just in and out.

BENHAM: Oh, I see.

CLIBURN: Part time we worked here and part time we worked with them.

BENHAM: I see. Well, about how old were you when you went to work with your father in the blacksmith shop? Can you remember that?

CLIBURN: Well, I guess you'd say twelve (12) or fifteen (15) years old.

BENHAM: Okay. Why are blacksmiths called blacksmiths? That's always been something that I've wanted to know.

CLIBURN: Now, that's the sixty-four (64) dollar question.

BENHAM: It is? Well, I'd like to know why. Do you know?

CLIBURN: Well, because he's a forge welder. He can shape iron and so on. I don't know what got started the blacksmith. I just don't know.

BENHAM: All right. You said that you went to work with your father and you've already told me that his blacksmith shop was located across the road from your house.

CLIBURN: That's right.

BENHAM: Is it still there?

CLIBURN: No. Torn down. When I moved up here and they moved the road out there, they tore it down. I got my own shop out there. The one I moved

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from Monticello.

BENHAM: I see. What did you do with all your tools when you closed up your blacksmith shop?

CLIBURN: Left them there in the shop. Still got them.

BENHAM: You still have them when they tore it down in Monticello?

CLIBURN: Oh, the old one?

BENHAM: Yes.

CLIBURN: Oh, he gave them to first one and another.

BENHAM: Oh, your father?

CLIBURN: Yes.

BENHAM: Now let me get this straight. The blacksmith shop that you had in Monticello, was your father working there with you?

CLIBURN: No, that was my own.

BENHAM: Oh, that was your own. Well, that's the one I am talking about. When you tore that down,

CLIBURN: I brought it up here and put up a shop and put the tools in it.

BENHAM: Well, that's what I wanted to ask you about. Well, did you have certain times to open your blacksmith shop in the morning? Did you have certain hours, you know, like any other profession?

CLIBURN: No, you couldn't do that, because farmers come in early and they'll come late. They come all through the day. You don't have any certain hours.

BENHAM: I see. Just could be at five o'clock or it could be anytime, couldn't it?

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CLIBURN: Anytime.

BENHAM: And when did your day end? Did you have any certain time when you closed up your shop?

CLIBURN: No, when you got a chance to get out.

BENHAM: Well, can you tell me some of the duties of a blacksmith?

CLIBURN: Well, the most of it is do good work, be as nice as you can with people, and charging what's a reasonable price. I think that's the most important thing.

BENHAM: What sort of tools did you have in the blacksmith shop? I am talking about your shop now.

CLIBURN: Oh, I had a joiner, a band saw, a post drill, electric drill, a rip saw, blower, electric welder.

BENHAM: Now wait, just wait one minute. As you tell me each one of these things, can you tell me what you did with each one of these things? What was it for, what you did with it? Could you tell me that?

CLIBURN: Oh, yes.

BENHAM: All right, can you begin wherever you started?

CLIBURN: Well, started with a blower. You got your iron hot to hammer out or to shape it or got it hot to punch holes in the iron if you were going to punch them and different things like that or weld to lay plow points. And the band saw was to saw out things that had different kinds of crooks or shapes to them that you couldn't saw out with the rip saw. You sawed it on the band saw. And then the rip saw sawed where you were just going to rip something open. The post drill's where you had a whole lot of heavy drilling to do, too big for a hand drill. The hand drill

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was where you drilled on the outside or inside, little holes and big ones. And the joiner was to size stuff, shape it down as thin or thick as you wanted it or to dress it. And I guess that's about all.

BENHAM: Can you tell me, well, you've already said all this in detail so it's no use going back into it. All right, what did you burn in the forge?

CLIBURN: Coal.

BENHAM: Well, where did you get this coal from?

CLIBURN: Well, you used to get it from Barnes and McLain. Got some at Farmer's Supply at Brookhaven, Columbia, Jackson. Anywhere where they had it to sell it.

BENHAM: Well, suppose you wanted to get the fire hotter, what did you have to do?

CLIBURN: Well, you had to put something in there that was dry to start blowing it, then you're ready for coal, start your blower, and it's gone.

BENHAM: Well, what did you use to blow it with, blow it with your mouth or what did you do?

CLIBURN: Had an electric blower.

BENHAM: Well, did you have one when you started, an electric blower?

CLIBURN: No, I had a hand blower.

BENHAM: That's what I wanted to ask you. Do you still have that hand blower?

CLIBURN: No, I got an electric blower.

BENHAM: Oh, it's a shame you didn't keep that. What did you do with that? That would be an heirloom today.

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CLIBURN: Oh, I couldn't tell you. I don't remember what I did with it.

BENHAM: Well, did all the blacksmiths shoe horses?

CLIBURN: No. Pretty well all of them do it, but not all of them. I did.

BENHAM: Why do horses have to have shoes anyway?

CLIBURN: Well, they get crippled in the feet, get rocks in them. Feet chip off. Put shoes on them, that makes them sound, solid, not bunged up, and he can walk and pull better.

BENHAM: Well, did mules have to have shoes on them too?

CLIBURN: Yes.

BENHAM: They had the same sort of problems?

CLIBURN: Same thing. Gravel, they couldn't walk on gravel roads without them.

BENHAM: I see. I want you to describe how you would shoe a horse, because I don't know and I'm sure a lot of other people don't either.

CLIBURN: Well, first thing you take snips and snip his hoof off.

BENHAM: Well, what do you mean by snipping?

CLIBURN: I mean you take some pinchers, you call them pinchers, and pinch his hoof off and then you take a rasp and level it off. And then you put your shoe on there and nail it on.

BENHAM: Nail it on to what?

CLIBURN: Nail it to the foot.

BENHAM: You see, you're going to have to describe everything because the tape isn't going to tell me how you're doing it. You're going to have to describe every little thing, you see, so we'll understand.

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CLIBURN: Well, you put the shoe up on his foot and drive a nail in it and then you take your hammer and get a hold on it with a claw hammer fork and twist like that and it nips the nail off. And then you take a block of iron and put under it, and you turn that nail up and hammer it back on his foot and it's clinched on there; it won't come off.

BENHAM: I see. Well, how do you get the shoe off of the horse?

CLIBURN: Well, you're going to have to unclinch that nail and take some pinchers and get under the shoe and pull it off.

BENHAM: Is that painful?

CLIBURN: No.

BENHAM: Is there another name that a horseshoer goes by?

CLIBURN: No, not that I know of.

BENHAM: What tools does a blacksmith need for shoeing a horse?

CLIBURN: He needs a shoe hammer, he needs a rasp, he needs a knife to trim the feet with, he needs a stool to put his foot on, and he needs some clincher tongs, and he needs some pinchers.

BENHAM: How were the horses, well, you have told me that, how were the horses' shoes kept on.

CLIBURN: Well, clinching those nails holds them on.

BENHAM: All right. How was a horseshoe made? Was a horseshoe first put into a fire?

CLIBURN: Yes.

BENHAM: I want to know how it was. Where did you get this iron to make the horseshoe? Where did you get it?

CLIBURN: You got it at a hardware somewhere, hardware store.

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BENHAM: Well, did it come shaped like a horseshoe?

CLIBURN: Yes.

BENHAM: You didn't shape it yourself?

CLIBURN: Yes, you had to shape it. Shoes, you get different sizes for different horses' feet. You have to know the size to buy and then you have to take it and put it in a forge and get it hot and reshape it.

BENHAM: Oh, I see. So if it was too big, you'd have to put it in the forge.

CLIBURN: And if it was too wide, you'd expand it.

BENHAM: And putting it in the fire, what did that do to it?

CLIBURN: Well, it softened it, made it easy to work.

BENHAM: And then when you got through, what did you do with it? After you took it out of the fire, where did you put it then?

CLIBURN: Well, you laid it down until it cooled, then you nailed it on the mule's or horse's foot.

BENHAM: Well, did you ever put it into a pot of tepid water?

CLIBURN: No, you don't temper horseshoes.

BENHAM: Oh, you don't do that?

CLIBURN: No.

BENHAM: Well, what is that you do temper like that?

CLIBURN: Well, different kinds of steel. High tension steel.

BENHAM: I see. Well, that is very interesting to know. I thought you put it into...

CLIBURN: It sure is.

BENHAM: Well, you see that's the reason why we are asking you these questions. Why do people nail horseshoes over their doors or under their steps or over their steps or whatever? Why do they do that?

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CLIBURN: They call it good luck. I don't know where it got started up, but that's what they call it and why they do it.

BENHAM: I know, because we've got one. I found one on the road in front of my house and I said, "Oh, I'm putting that in my house." What are some of the other things that you made in your shop?

CLIBURN: That's a hard one.

BENHAM: Oh, well, you must have made a lot of other things.

CLIBURN: Oh, I made loggers' dreams.

BENHAM: What's that? What's a logger dream?

CLIBURN: A loader for a truck to load, built on an old truck to load logs with. And I built different kinds of things to go on tractors, like harrows.

BENHAM: Like what?

CLIBURN: Like harrows, you know, a harrow, tractor harrows.

BENHAM: Oh, a harrow.

CLIBURN: Yes.

BENHAM: I see.

CLIBURN: You make wagon wheels. You make wagon, wood wagons and all-metal wagons. Log wagons.

BENHAM: Was there any particular way that you made a wagon? Well, did you ever have to make a carriage wagon a wheel?

CLIBURN: No, I never made one of them.

BENHAM: Well, suppose you wanted to make a wagon to haul wood. How would you go about making a wagon?

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CLIBURN: Well, first you'd have to make the axle. Then you'd make the wheels, then the bolster, then the hounds, front and back hounds.

BENHAM: What's a hound?

CLIBURN: This thing that goes out from the axle into the coupling pole. And then you'd have to make the bolsters.

BENHAM: And what's that?

CLIBURN: That's the bolster that sits up on top of the axle and the hound that goes through. It sits up on top. They call it a rocking bolster.

BENHAM: I see. And what does that do?

CLIBURN: That keeps whatever you put on from rolling off.

BENHAM: I see. Well, did you have to make your own wheel? Did you have to cut out the wood to go around it?

CLIBURN: Yes, yes.

BENHAM: You did that yourself?

CLIBURN: Yes.

BENHAM: Did you have a pattern to make that with?

CLIBURN: If you didn't have a pattern, you had to make a pattern.

BENHAM: Did you ever have to make one?

CLIBURN: Oh, thousands of them.

BENHAM: Well, how did you bend the wood to make it circle?

CLIBURN: Well, we didn't bend it; we bought them bent. If we couldn't buy them bent, we took a band saw and cut it out.

BENHAM: Well, did you cut it out of a big piece of board?

CLIBURN: A big piece of oak.

BENHAM: Oak. And that's what you made your wheels with?

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CLIBURN: That's right, the rim out of it.

BENHAM: Well, why did you all use oak instead of pine?

CLIBURN: Lasts longer.

BENHAM: Did you ever make an ox yoke?

CLIBURN: Oh, plenty of them.

BENHAM: Well, what were they used for?

CLIBURN: To work on oxen to haul logs with.

BENHAM: Do you remember when they used oxen? Can you remember?

CLIBURN: Yes, sir.

BENHAM: About what year was that? Can you remember?

CLIBURN: Well, from the time I was born. The last oxen in this country were about eight (8) or ten (10) years ago.

BENHAM: Well, eight (8) or ten (10) years ago? Well, let's see, that was about 1967, wasn't it? And that's when they stopped making them?

CLIBURN: Well, that's when the last oxen were in this country. Mims Berry had them up there at New Hebron.

BENHAM: Is that so?

CLIBURN: That's right. When they put St. Regis Mill down there, he had some oxen he worked down there.

BENHAM: Well, I'll be. And I was living here and I didn't even know it.

CLIBURN: We got a picture in there of them.

BENHAM: Oh, you have?

CLIBURN: Yes.

BENHAM: I'd like to see it when it's over. What kind of people used

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these oxen?

CLIBURN: People that sawmilled and logged for sawmills. Different kinds of jobs like that.

BENHAM: Well, would you say that these oxen, were they better than mules or horses?

CLIBURN: Yes, in lakes and marshy places you could put those oxen where you couldn't put a mule. They'd bog down.

BENHAM: And an ox wouldn't bog down? Yet they were heavier than they were, weren't they?

CLIBURN: Didn't make any difference. They had forked feet, you see.

BENHAM: Oh, forked feet?

CLIBURN: Two-feet foot.

BENHAM: Oh, well, that's interesting. And did you all have to shoe those oxen too?

CLIBURN: Well, shod a few. Go to put them on a gravel road way back, been long years ago.

BENHAM: Can you remember if you ever heard people talk about when the oxen first came to this county?

CLIBURN: No.

BENHAM: You don't know. And you don't know even who had any way back yonder, do you? All right.

CLIBURN: Well, that's been a hundred or more years ago.

BENHAM: Well, I know it was. I know that. Well, how did you go about making an ox yoke? Is there a special way to do it? What kind of wood did you use?

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CLIBURN: You use tupler gum.²

BENHAM: What kind of gum?

CLIBURN: Tupler.

BENHAM: How do you spell that?

CLIBURN: T-U-P-L-E-R.

BENHAM: Where do you find this gum?

CLIBURN: You find it on the heads of these creeks, in marshlands, places like that. Then you cut it down and you size a piece up of six by nine (6 x 9) like a crosstie, and then when you do that you take a hatchet and hew it off as smooth as you can. Then you put a piling on there and mark the yoke out. And before you hew that out, then you bore the holes. Well, when you bore the holes then you hew it out in the shape.

BENHAM: Well, how long is the yoke? How long does it go through this hole?

CLIBURN: Well, it varies. The length of the yoke is according to the size of the oxen. It will be anywhere from four (4) to five (5) feet.

BENHAM: Long?

CLIBURN: Long.

BENHAM: And would that be enough for just one (1) oxen?

CLIBURN: No, two (2) oxen.

BENHAM: Oh, for two (2) oxen, I see. Did you put it together with nails or anything like that?

CLIBURN: No, it was all one solid piece; it wasn't put together.

BENHAM: I see.

CLIBURN: You put bows, what you call bows, in it.

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BENHAM: What was it called?

CLIBURN: Bows.

BENHAM: A bow?

CLIBURN: Bow, that went around his neck for him to pull better.

BENHAM: Oh, yes. I am trying to see. Do you have one here?

CLIBURN: No. I got an old pattern, ox yoke pattern, out there.

BENHAM: Well, I would like to see what that looks like. Did you have to have a special kind of wood and you said you did.

CLIBURN: That's right.

BENHAM: And you also told me what it was. Were you ever called on in an emergency to make a wagon wheel or something else like that?

CLIBURN: Many times.

BENHAM: Well, can you tell me what happened? Can you tell me something that was very unusual? What was something that you had to be called on, say, in the middle of the night to do, to help somebody with? What? Can you tell me?

CLIBURN: Well, you didn't do much blacksmithing in the night; you did a whole lot of welding at night. Electric welder. You'd go out in the country and weld for people. Hay baler, hay rake, stuff like that.

BENHAM: Were there other blacksmiths around here besides you?

CLIBURN: Oh, yes. There were different ones, Monticello, New Hebron, Silver Creek, Prentiss, Collins, places like that.

BENHAM: Mr. Cliburn, what is an anvil?

CLIBURN: Well, it's a block of iron that's shaped out. It's got a flat part on it and it's got a round part on it they call the iron, the horn part, to shape round things on.

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BENHAM: Well, can you describe that to me a little bit more fully?
What's it made out of, what kind of iron?

CLIBURN: Made out of steel.

BENHAM: Steel.

CLIBURN: Steel, hard steel.

BENHAM: Where do you get the steel from?

CLIBURN: All the anvils that I ever knew of were factory-made. Make them at the factory.

BENHAM: Can you tell me about how much they weighted or something?

CLIBURN: Oh, they weigh anywhere from a hundred (100) to three hundred (300) pounds.

BENHAM: All right, you were telling me something about how it was made. You said it protruded out. Well, what was that for?

CLIBURN: Well, it's got a horn on it they call the horn.

BENHAM: A horn.

CLIBURN: Yes, about that long. It runs from about the biggest hand of your finger (finger of your hand) up to about four (4) inches in diameter back to the flat part of the anvil.

BENHAM: And what was that used for?

CLIBURN: To flatten iron with, to sharpen it, to hammer it out. Anything you want to do. Shape it. Anything.

BENHAM: I see. Can it ever be worn out?

CLIBURN: Oh, yes.

BENHAM: Did you ever have one to wear out?

CLIBURN: Yes.

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BENHAM: How many times did you have to get a new anvil?

CLIBURN: Well, I think maybe I've owned about three (3).

BENHAM: And how long were you a blacksmith? From the time you say you were about fourteen (14) on?

CLIBURN: Yes, off and on.

BENHAM: Off and on until when you retired? And how old were you when you retired?

CLIBURN: Sixty-five (65).

BENHAM: Sixty-five (65). All right, well, that's a pretty long time. You found out a lot about it, didn't you?

CLIBURN: Sure did.

BENHAM: What kind of light did you first use in your shop?

CLIBURN: Light?

BENHAM: Yes, like did you use a lamp at the beginning?

CLIBURN: Yes. Didn't have any electric lights.

BENHAM: And later what did you use?

CLIBURN: Electric lights.

BENHAM: About what year was that when that come in? Can you remember that?

CLIBURN: Oh, about '37, '36, '37.

BENHAM: All right. Mr. Cliburn, did you do any blacksmithing under a tree in the summertime?

CLIBURN: Yes, I have done some.

BENHAM: You know, there is a poem by, I don't remember now who it is, but it says something about the blacksmith who goes underneath the tree and,

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you know, hammers away.

CLIBURN: Yes, I had a little old mess like that I blacksmithed with.

BENHAM: Well, where was your blacksmith located in Monticello?

CLIBURN: Behind Tom Jolly's old store, in the old Gillaspy building.

BENHAM: Is that where the library stands now? The new library?

Was that where it was?

CLIBURN: No, that's where John L. Weathersby's old shop was. Mine was further on down behind. You know where Tom Jolly's old store used to be?

BENHAM: No, sir, I don't know. Is it near the courthouse?

CLIBURN: Yes, it's about a block away from the courthouse.

BENHAM: Going which way? Towards the school?

CLIBURN: Going west.

BENHAM: Going west. Now, that's not where the Ford-Bufkin place is, is it?

CLIBURN: No, it's between the courthouse and the Ford and Bufkin place.

BENHAM: I don't remember where that was.

CLIBURN: Well, the shop that I had down there was right in front of Ms. Verne Ward's.

BENHAM: Well, can you tell me a little bit more about that?

CLIBURN: Well, the street corner's there and it's right in front of Ms. Jessie Bourn.

BENHAM: What was the main job that you did in your shop?

CLIBURN: Well, farm work was the main work I did for farmers.

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(Begin Side Two of Tape)

BENHAM: How did you keep your shop warm in the wintertime?

CLIBURN: Well, you had that fire in the forge, that's about all we had.

BENHAM: Did you ever make buckboards and carts?

CLIBURN: No.

BENHAM: Who were the people that asked you to make different things?

CLIBURN: You mean farmers by names?

BENHAM: No, no, you don't have to name them. Just say like farmers and who else asked you to do things?

CLIBURN: Oh, farmers, loggers.

BENHAM: Yes, like that. That's what I mean.

CLIBURN: It's hard. There's lots of people different. Women.

BENHAM: Oh, the women too?

CLIBURN: The whole thing. They'd want you to make them little biddy troughs and patch their biddy brooders and all different kinds of things.

BENHAM: I see. And you obliged them.

CLIBURN: Yes.

BENHAM: I'm sure you did. That was a nice thing to do. Do you still have some of your blacksmith tools around?

CLIBURN: I have them all.

BENHAM: Good. Could I take a picture of you and some of your tools?

CLIBURN: I guess so.

BENHAM: All right. How did you go about making drilling forms? You said something about drilling things. How did you go about making them?

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CLIBURN: Well, it's just a regular, what they call a post drill.

It's already made. You buy it like that. Got an electric motor to pull it.

BENHAM: Do you know what a log dog and chain was used for?

CLIBURN: A what?

BENHAM: A log dog and chain. Have you ever heard that expression?

CLIBURN: I don't believe.

BENHAM: What is a bench vise?

CLIBURN: Oh, a bench vise?

BENHAM: Yes.

CLIBURN: It's a short vise that you bolted on a bench and set it up on a bench.

BENHAM: And what is that used for?

CLIBURN: It's a bench vise to hold things.

BENHAM: I see.

CLIBURN: While you work on it or do what you want to do on it.

BENHAM: Oh, it keeps it from wiggling around, doesn't it?

CLIBURN: That's right.

BENHAM: Did you ever make saddles and harnesses in your shop?

CLIBURN: No.

BENHAM: How did you measure things?

CLIBURN: Well, you measure them with a ruler or tape or square.

BENHAM: What year did you meet your future wife?

CLIBURN: About 1923.

BENHAM: What is her full maiden name?

CLIBURN: Lennie Nesbit Sullivan.

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BENHAM: I'm going to ask you later how to spell that. When and where was she born?

CLIBURN: In Simpson County at Shivers, Mississippi.

BENHAM: And when was she born? Can you remember?

CLIBURN: No, I can't remember.

BENHAM: Well, that's all right. How many children did you have?

CLIBURN: We have three (3).

BENHAM: And what are their names?

CLIBURN: Kenneth Earl, Burl, and Steve, Jr.

BENHAM: Did your wife work outside of the home?

CLIBURN: No, she worked at home.

BENHAM: Did some of the people, mostly men and children, come to your shop and watch you work?

CLIBURN: Plenty of them.

BENHAM: Did they ever want to know how to do something?

CLIBURN: Yes.

BENHAM: Did you ever give any children small jobs to do so they could make a little spending money or something?

CLIBURN: Yes.

BENHAM: Did they sit around and talk with you?

CLIBURN: Yes.

BENHAM: What kind of a man was usually a blacksmith? Was he a tall, masculine man, very muscular, or was he a tall, skinny guy?

CLIBURN: No, there are all kinds of different types of men. Different sizes, shapes. Some of them little, some of them big. Some of them big

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muscles, some of them haven't got much muscle.

BENHAM: Or was it just in knowing how to do it?

CLIBURN: Just knowing how to do it.

BENHAM: Just knowing how to do that, I see, Did women ever go into the blacksmith shop?

CLIBURN: Oh, yes, plenty of them.

BENHAM: Can you describe step by step how a plow point was sharpened?

CLIBURN: Yes, you've got to get it hot, then you put it under the power hammer and it beats it out.

BENHAM: A power hammer?

CLIBURN: A power hammer.

BENHAM: Well, well, I don't quite understand that. Suppose you were trying to tell me that. How would you go about telling it to me?

CLIBURN: Well, a power hammer's got a clutch down at the ground. You put your foot on top of that clutch and then you mash and hold your plow there and it beats it out, thins it out.

BENHAM: I see.

CLIBURN: So it will cut the ground.

BENHAM: Well, is the plow, is it straight or is it curved or what?

CLIBURN: Some of them straight and some of them curved.

BENHAM: How did you sharpen it and set logging tongs?

CLIBURN: Well, you did it by hand. You had to point them and then you had to get them hot and shape them.

BENHAM: Well, did you shape them on the anvil that you were telling me about?

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CLIBURN: Yes, that's right.

BENHAM: And how did you sharpen a Kant hook?

CLIBURN: When you'd have to take the hook off, get it in a forge and get it hot and sharpen it with a hand hammer.

BENHAM: What's a Kant hook used for anyway?

CLIBURN: To log with, roll logs.

BENHAM: What was the purpose of setting them? What was the purpose of it?

CLIBURN: To make them hold better. Catch and hold.

BENHAM: Catch and hold what?

CLIBURN: The logs that you were turning.

BENHAM: I see. How did you get iron welded together before the time of electric welders? How did you do that?

CLIBURN: Well, you had to champ it down, wedge it off, and then lap it. And when you get it so hot, then you have to put the welding compound on it. You get to where it would stick together. We'd pull one part and we'd pull both parts, and then you went to hammer it and weld it together.

BENHAM: I see. Welded it together by getting it hot?

CLIBURN: That's right.

BENHAM: I see.

CLIBURN: Weld and heat.

BENHAM: I see. Was this something that came in a bottle or something or a container that you poured on top of the things to hold them together?

CLIBURN: Well, we used E-Z Welding Compound.

BENHAM: The what?

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CLIBURN: E-Z Welding Compound.

BENHAM: I see. Did you make or design some of the tools to do your job or did you buy almost everything?

CLIBURN: No, I made a whole lot of them.

BENHAM: You made them yourself?

CLIBURN: Yes.

BENHAM: Well, that was interesting. Did you keep some of them?

CLIBURN: Got them now.

BENHAM: Oh, that is good. What was the most unusual job that you ever worked on and what was it and how was it used?

CLIBURN: Way back yonder, oil people were in here drilling a well. They got to where they couldn't get any left-hand clutches. They had right-hand clutches and left-hand, but the left-hand was worn out. Tried to order some from different places. They couldn't get them and the man asked me did I believe I could make some left-hand clutches if he'd bring me a pattern. And I told him, "Yes, might could." I didn't know, but he brought them and I made them.

BENHAM: Well, what were they used for?

CLIBURN: To hold pipe, drill an oil well.

BENHAM: And was this the first time that you had ever done this?

CLIBURN: The first time I ever saw one.

BENHAM: And was it successful?

CLIBURN: Oh, yes.

BENHAM: I'm sure that made you feel good, didn't it?

CLIBURN: Yes, I guess so.

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BENHAM: Have you ever done much traveling in your lifetime?

CLIBURN: Not too much.

BENHAM: Well, where did you go, for instance?

CLIBURN: Well, went to Illinois and Indiana.

BENHAM: Oh, well, you've done a whole lot of traveling then.

CLIBURN: Out in Texas several times, Florida, down on the Coast.

That's about all I know of.

BENHAM: Well, did a lot of this traveling have to do in connection with your work? With your blacksmithing?

CLIBURN: No, no.

BENHAM: Well, what are your hobbies?

CLIBURN: Well, right now?

BENHAM: Yes. Now that you have retired, what are some of your hobbies? What do you do?

CLIBURN: I like to work my garden, I like to fool with my chickens, and I like to feed my fish and catch them.

BENHAM: Oh, that's a very nice hobby. You've got a lot of hobbies then, so when you get tired of one, you can do something else, can't you?

CLIBURN: Right.

BENHAM: Well, I've enjoyed this interview with you, Mr. Cliburn.

(Pause)

BENHAM: Mr. Cliburn, you mentioned just a little while ago that you did some carpentry work for Camp Shelby, is that right?

CLIBURN: That's right. I worked there from the start until the finish.

BENHAM: Well, how many years was that? In what year was it that you

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started this?

CLIBURN: I don't remember what year it was. Along in the 1940's when World War II broke out when we started.

BENHAM: And what did you do while you were there?

CLIBURN: I did everything there was to do - carpentering.

BENHAM: Well, can you go into a little bit more detail? I mean, what did you do? Did you make a house or did you make a barracks or what did you do?

CLIBURN: Well, when you worked there, you worked with different crews and different crews did different things. There were framers, there were foundation men, there were framing men, there were men that finished the outside finish and then inside finish and when you got that, you were through with the building.

BENHAM: I see.

CLIBURN: There were one hundred and five (105) of us worked in a crew.

BENHAM: Can you remember how many places that you people constructed?

CLIBURN: Well, I worked there and when it finished up, I went to Pascagoula to a Navy housing project and finished that and I went from there to Biloxi to Keesler Field. Stayed until I finished that.

BENHAM: Did you do this after you retired from being a blacksmith?

CLIBURN: No, no. That was in between times.

BENHAM: I see. Sometimes you did the blacksmith and sometimes you did this, is that right?

CLIBURN: That's right.

BENHAM: All right. Now, you also said that you did a lot of carpentry

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work in your house.

CLIBURN: Oh, yes, Done all ever been done, I never have hired anybody.

BENHAM: Did you build this house?

CLIBURN: No, my daddy did.

BENHAM: Well, is there anything else that you could add to things that you did in your lifetime?

CLIBURN: Well, we carpentered some with the Great Southern a whole lot.

BENHAM: The what?

CLIBURN: Carpentered, For the Great Southern. Tear the camps down and move them. Build them, rebuild them back.

BENHAM: Now is this with the railroad?

CLIBURN: No, that was with the Great Southern Lumber Company.

BENHAM: Oh, I see. This is what you mentioned before.

CLIBURN: Yes, we made handles for them. Every kind of handle that they used, we made them for them.

BENHAM: Well, what were these handles used for?

CLIBURN: Axe handles, peevy handles, marble handles, hammer handles. Dip paddles they used to dip turpentine with. That's about all the kinds I can think of.

BENHAM: All right, is there anything else that you'd like to add to this?

CLIBURN: No, I think that's about all.

BENHAM: All right, well, thank you very much, Mr. Cliburn, for this

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very interesting talk.

CLIBURN: You're welcome.

(End of Interview)

(Transcribed by Evelyn Benham)

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Transcriber's Notes

¹July 24, 1906

²Tupelo gum